

dissent

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Nukes, Oil, Death, and Politics

David Bromwich, Peter Connolly,
Michael Harrington, David W. Orr

From the Walls of Peking

A Dazibao Plea for Freedom

The Cultural Criticism of Christopher Lasch
Dennis H. Wrong

Faces and Masks
George Konrád

The Problem of the West Bank
Leonard Fein

French Communists: A Critical Anatomy
Cornelius Castoriadis

What Is Political Equality?

An Exchange between Philip Green and Robert Dahl

BOOKS

MOVIES



David Spitz (1916-1979)

David Spitz first came to *Dissent* in the middle '60s, when our unpopularity was, if anything, greater than usual. He wrote an essay for a 1966 issue sharply criticizing the then-fashionable notion of "repressive tolerance," one of the more absurd favorites of the New Left according to which the growth of tolerance in American society was actually a disguised form of repression. With keen polemical vigor and analytical skill, David demolished this notion from start to finish. I remember the pleasure we all felt upon receiving this essay: we had found an ally at a time when there were few to be had.

Later, when David came to teach at the City University of New York, he joined the *Dissent* editorial board and wrote a series of notable studies for us. He was not, by training or temperament, a journalist. His special gift lay in the realm of political ideas or, more accurately, those often unspoken values that prompt us to adhere to one or another idea. We valued him immensely, for he did things the rest of us seldom could do, and he in turn was steadily supportive of our work.

There were shades of difference between David and some of us. He could, I suppose, be called a socialist liberal, and we, liberal socialists. It would take a keen eye to see this difference through to the end. Whatever its significance, we worked well together, as friends and collaborators.

His last article for us, a critique of Raoul Berger's book on the Supreme Court, appeared in the previous issue. He was planning an ambitious essay on Mill and Marx, but that, alas, we shall never have.

David Spitz was a man of intellectual probity, devoted to liberal values and humane conduct. Our ranks are thinned by his loss, and our lives impoverished.

I. H.

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Edited by Richard R. Fagen. Why does the United States respond as it does to political and economic events in Latin America? How does the United States condition events in Latin America, and how is it in turn conditioned by the results of its influence? This volume presents ten papers which seek the answers to these questions by exploring the deep sources of U.S. foreign policy toward the hemisphere. Part I deals with general aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Part II is a collection of case studies of relations between individual Latin American countries and the United States. September. Cloth, about \$18.50; paper, about \$6.95

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Stanford University Press

Leonard Fein

The Middle East: What Next?

There is something unseemly about the invariably gloomy analyses of the problems that now confront the Middle East, in the wake of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. The treaty was in itself so remarkable an achievement, and so unexpected, that the event clearly calls for a substantial pause in order to celebrate and, however briefly, to enjoy. No matter that the major tasks still lie ahead; no matter that it is virtually impossible to imagine how the problems that now must, finally, be addressed can be resolved. We owe ourselves at least an overnight pass away from crisis—and we would be wise to take more.

I do not know the mood in Egypt, but both in Israel and in the American Jewish community, the Israel-Egypt treaty evoked at best a shallow and ephemeral joy. Within days of the signing, speakers were being lined up for the 1979-80 season in synagogues and community centers across America, with the leading topic, "The Crisis of Peace."

In Israel, according to all recent reports, people seem bent on confirming Abba Eban's assessment that "some people can't take yes for an answer." Joy and celebration happened at desultory public rallies, and have long since been forgotten. In their stead, there is a studied avoidance of the large international issues, or—when they are discussed—a chilling absence of hope.

It is not difficult to explain the response. It is a combination of exhaustion after 16 months of bickering, small-minded and miserly months punctuated by imaginative and daring days, and a sober assessment of the complexity of the problems, which can no longer be evaded, which

are now in the middle of a road that must be taken. Here is a case where politics should walk in the footsteps of aesthetics. The aesthetics call for celebration, and only a healthy sense of what has been accomplished can offer the incentive to deal with the obstacles that have now come into full view. It is too soon, entirely too soon, to be taking the Egypt-Israel treaty for granted, to be bogged down by the Palestine question, or the West Bank-Gaza question, or the Judea-Samaria question. (A thorn by any other name. . . .) Instead, every ounce of prospective benefit of the new Egypt-Israel relationship should be weighed up, every remaining kink gently massaged until the full strength of the relationship is realized. That strength, and the full sense of it, are needed to deal with what lies ahead; the obstacles will not be overcome by exhausted, dispirited people.

So let us celebrate. And, having celebrated, let us see how the acrimony that is so widely predicted for the months ahead might be avoided.

I REFRAIN from a detailed review of the substance of the West Bank problem, which is by now quite generally appreciated, as also of the Begin autonomy proposal, which is hardly a serious proposal. The central question is whether there is any way in which the insistence of the Palestinians on genuine national self-expression and the insistence of the Israelis on their right to security and stability can be made compatible. If the issue is allowed to be debated in terms of legal sovereignty, there will be no end to the debate. Whatever the legal status of the West Bank—and it seems to me quite plain that Israel's claim is not less compelling

than any competing claim—the matter we confront is essentially political rather than legal.

The PLO has offered no reassurance that it would be satisfied to accept a West Bank-Gaza state as an adequate response to its demands. Instead, it continues in a program of well-financed butchery, posing as a collection of romantic freedom fighters even as it murders women and children. A world in which Arafat can be termed a moderate, as he has come to be regarded in some “sophisticated” circles, is a world gone mad. Moderates do not take credit for the ugliness the PLO substitutes for policy.

Nor, from the PLO’s perspective, is their program any wiser than it is moral. For the net effect of their viciousness is to make Mr. Begin’s job ever so much easier. It is no secret that he would prefer to concede as little as he possibly can on the West Bank. His own long-standing preference remains the assertion of Israeli sovereignty over the area. Short of that, he wants the status quo. What he does not want is a situation that will lead to the assertion of Palestinian sovereignty. He makes his case on two counts: historic entitlement, and security considerations.

Early in Begin’s administration, the Prime Minister emphasized historic entitlement. When that argument fell flat in this country—in Congress and even within the Jewish community—he shifted to an emphasis on security matters. In the light of the PLO’s behavior, that emphasis seems entirely reasonable to many Israelis. The kind of national debate that must take place in Israel if a genuine reckoning with Palestinian claims is to be undertaken will simply not happen in the context of weekly terrorist attacks. It is not the crazies of the right that will prevent it from happening; it is a widespread national consensus.

ALPHONSE, GASTON. There is no serious debate within Israel regarding the Palestinian question; there is no serious debate within the PLO regarding the Israeli question. A random voice, now and again, here or there, is not the same as a serious debate. Virtually every serious discussion of these matters in which I have participated over the course of the last several years concludes that one side must give the other side a “signal.” The issue of which side ought to provide the first signal depends on the aegis of the discussion. In the absence of the kinds of signals scholars propose, the Israelis accept Nahariya and Tiberias as relevant signals. And who can say that they are wrong?

Yet, the Palestine question will not go away. Mr. Begin’s draft autonomy proposal, even if it were accepted as drafted, will not make it go away; it will exacerbate it. An intensive program of Jewish settlement in the West Bank will not make it go away, nor will a thousand legal briefs that “prove” that the West Bank “belongs” to Israel. The only thing that might make it go away is to acknowledge that, whatever the historic rights and wrongs of the matter, there needs to be a form of Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank. And the healthiest, most satisfying form of self-rule is, obviously, independence.

The PLO leadership, it is said, would not be satisfied with the only kind of independence that is compatible with Israel’s security requirements—to wit, a demilitarized state. They will see it as a sham, an impotent and shameful compromise. But the PLO leadership represents the West Bank Palestinians today principally because there is no other game in town. (The stinginess of the autonomy plan makes it an entirely unacceptable game.)

Were the Israelis to propose a more interesting enterprise, there is at least some prospect that it would generate an important debate both among the Palestinians and among the Israelis. Such a proposal would, of course, have to be entirely consonant with Israel’s security requirements. And this, in turn, means that it would have to insist upon total demilitarization of the West Bank, upon freedom of inspection to monitor the demilitarization, upon some restrictions on immigration policy, perhaps even on some continued Israeli military presence in specified enclaves. Given the current political climate within Israel, it might also have to provide for some continuing Jewish settlement in the area. It is not, in short, a wildly attractive plan. But it has one great virtue; it represents an acknowledgment of the entitlement of the Palestinians.

In the absence of such a plan, the predictions that this will prove an unprecedentedly difficult and acrimonious year are quite likely correct. Mr. Sadat may decide to drop his demands on behalf of the Palestinians, given the response of the Arab world to the Egypt-Israel treaty. But that is not a likely development, nor, even if it were to come to pass, would it represent anything more than a temporary palliative. The Palestine problem is not a figment of Sadat’s imagination; it is a real problem, and it requires not “handling,” but a real solution.

It is apparent that Jordan does not want to cooperate in being a keystone to such a solution. Then what other solution can there be, save for an Israeli initiative?

Such an initiative, however, is most likely to issue from the Begin government. There is no question that it would split the Likud, and there is very little question that Mr. Begin himself would not endorse it. If it is to come at all, it can come only as the consequence of a serious national debate. And such a debate cannot take place in the context of a sustained American campaign to pressure Israel into concessions. We are not dealing here with a distant desert called Sinai, but with a proximate territory called the West Bank, and Israelis have accepted for years—long before Mr. Begin's advent to power—the conventional wisdom that Arab rule over that territory will bring rocket shells into their living rooms.

This is why some time is needed, an interval in which the first fruits of peace can come to be tested, and can whet the appetite for more. Just now, if things go well, the Israelis are about to learn that it is not the case that Arabs cannot be trusted. They will learn, as the first lesson of peace, that at least one Arab, and perhaps one whole Arab country, *can* be trusted. This will, of course, be thought the exception that proves the rule, whatever that silly phrase means. But it is bound to be a disconcerting lesson, one that calls the conventional wisdom into question.

There are those in Israel who will want to take it another step. Today, they have no hearing, not against the background of the PLO, not against the background of the Arab response to Sadat, not against the background of what they themselves have accepted as conventional wisdom for these many years.

TIME, THEN. Time to savor, and then to speculate. Time that only the United States can provide, if, in this next round, it does not panic as it has so often in the past. Time, perhaps as well, in which those who count themselves among the civilized will cease and desist from their senseless indulgence of the PLO, an indulgence that upon its every expression simply reinforces the widespread belief among West Bank Palestinians that PLO terrorism provides important political benefits.

Failing time, the choice will remain a choice between intransigence and murder. Decent people will have no difficulty making the choice, terribly sad though it be. □

Thomas B. Edsall

Political Reform — Social Retreat

Conservative trends across the country result not only from a middle-class taxpayers' revolt but also from forces within the Democratic party that are hostile to any left-leaning tilt. An unexpected mainstay of these forces have been the procedural reformers, men and women often motivated by deeply felt and legitimate concerns: the abuse of executive power in Southeast Asia, Watergate, etc. Their work has led to a major alteration of the political landscape. A critical consequence, in the last decade, has been the placing of a disproportionate share of the cost of government upon the working and lower middle classes, which in turn is a key to antigovernment sentiment. While designed to curb the undemocratic exercise of power, recent procedural reforms of the legislative and political process—as opposed to social reform aimed at reducing economic inequities—have largely benefited a Republican approach to government. These reforms have encouraged a change in the Democratic presidential constituency from a collection of minorities comprising a left-leaning majority toward an essentially white, middle-class majority, leaving minorities with fewer points of leverage. Thus, at a time when Democrats control both the presidency and Congress, these measures have undermined the power of the Democratic party to formulate policy. They have tended to take the power and profits of the elective process away from party loyalists whose backgrounds approximated those of the voters themselves, and have turned them over to a middle-class elite. Of most significance has been the attack on the structural basis of the Democratic party.

One factor forcing the Democrats toward the left in the past has been that party and elected officials saw their constituency as a coalition of minorities. The major device for maintaining this coalition has been to grant favors to separate groups. Everybody got paid off. Until recently, the usual campaign strategy was to determine what it would take to get labor, blacks, Jews, big-city mayors, contractors with ties to local Democratic parties, etc. behind a candidate. Politics of this kind sent waves of poor Irish, Italians, and Poles through the network of

city-hall patronage and ultimately into the middle class. Those same workers and their elected representatives used the municipal contracting system to give ethnic builders and developers enough of an edge to begin to compete with the WASP establishment.

To a lesser extent, the same process continues with the black community. The "black seat" on the Supreme Court marks a political debt of the Democratic party. To a member of Common Cause seeking an elective process devoid of favoritism, this form of bargaining may be repugnant. But favoritism has provided legitimate—and illegitimate—protection to minorities that would have little chance if their legislated benefits were put to public referendum.

At the core of most reform lies the assumption that favoritism is not an integral part of politics but something to be eliminated. Public financing of elections is the classic example of the problems created by procedural reform. The surface logic in its behalf is impeccable: public financing will prevent special interests from buying campaigns and weaken or eliminate the ability of a wealthy candidate to purchase his election. In fact, however, it is questionable whether the injection of public funds at one point into the political process will eliminate the marketplace aspects of a political-economic system that is based on the marketplace. Instead, there is a strong case to be made, with some preliminary evidence from the Carter campaign, that public financing works as a *conservative* force.

Public financing frees a candidate from making commitments to constituent groups that have serious concern for specific legislation. On the surface a laudable goal, in practice, this encourages politicians to avoid taking controversial positions favoring minority interests, and instead to cautiously direct their appeal toward the white middle class concerned with saving tax dollars.

ONE REASON for the vacuity of Carter's domestic policy may well be that part of his primary campaign and his entire election campaign were financed with public money. He avoided political indebtedness; but he also avoided interlocking himself with forces that remain major influences in the legislative process: labor, Jews, big-city mayors, local political leaders. It may have been a successful campaign strategy to avoid entanglement with "the Humphrey coalition," but this also sharply increased the likelihood of a rootless, aimless domestic presidency. Morally imperfect as

it may be, private fund-raising forces a candidate to develop an internal, if unstated, consistency tying a candidate to a collection of interests that form the base for ideological coherence once in office. Public financing, in effect, has created a power vacuum.

The rapid growth in the number of direct-election presidential primaries—from 17 in 1968 to 30 in 1976—has had a similar effect. When delegates to the party convention were selected largely by state parties, coalition politics dominated a system in which victory goes to the politician who can put together a "majority of minorities." Party leaders think in terms of cutting up the pie—in this case, seats in a state delegation—for the active interest groups. To keep peace in the party, it is essential to give labor a share, blacks their cut, city bosses a chunk, top elected officials a piece, and to save a few spots for major donors. It was a system that clearly was not open but served partly, if inadequately, to force a presidential candidate to gear his appeal to the actual interests that make up the party. Replacement of this system with direct-election primaries makes commitments to the minorities in the traditional Democratic coalition a potential liability and again encourages a campaign strategy aimed at the white middle class.

Reform attacks on a system of politics based on appeals to minorities have gained strength with the simultaneous deterioration of the Roosevelt coalition. Within every one of the minorities, including blacks, there are growing blocks of persons who do not see themselves as in need of a protective governmental structure. A basic premise of the Roosevelt coalition and its descendants in the 1950s and 1960s was a shared interest in a government that could be pressured to rectify social problems. As some Americans of Southern and Central European descent are no longer tied to the working class, as Jews worry less over discrimination, and as Southern whites have abandoned the coalition, a commonality based on the sense of exclusion from national well-being has declined.

Another factor is the replacement of traditional precinct and ward leaders with persons specializing in mass appeals: pollsters, television consultants, PR men, and direct-mail specialists, a shift clearly favoring the middle class. At the same time, the creation of complex rules, both in setting up slates in primaries and in the organization of caucuses in "open" caucus states, means that delegates are no longer selected on the basis of vote-getting and

fund-raising ability but on the basis of verbal skills and legal aptitude. Again: qualities favoring the middle class over the working class.

The shift from an active constituency of traditional party workers to a middle-class elite has had the secondary effect of granting extraordinary leverage to the press. A decade ago, the press played a significant but essentially minor role, catching players in the political system when they stretched the rules too far; but most often it was viewed by campaigners as an outside force to be manipulated. Now the press not only serves as a major judge of a candidacy, it also sets moral ground rules for campaigns. One of the criteria by which the press judges the Democratic party is the extent to which a candidate is free of encumbering ties to the party machinery and special interests. The press is inherently critical of politically inspired compromises of principle; of rewards for loyalty, not merit; of the entire deal-cutting process that is essential to maintaining a fragile coalition in which shared interests barely outweigh potential conflict. The moral setting created in large part by the press established an ideal setting for a Carter candidacy based on calculated avoidance of specific commitment and a cultivated ideological blurring. The fundamentally critical stance of the press generally acts as a retardant on action. Allowing the press to assume the role of majority stockholder in the political process is like allowing a New England banker to have partial veto power over the corporate actions of a Sunbelt highway contractor.

All these alterations of campaign style have resulted, directly or indirectly, from the demand of reformers for a more "open" process. Public financing puts fund-raising in a presidential campaign entirely into the hands of the Federal Election Commission—and thereby reduces the likelihood of direct purchase of a candidate. Direct primaries are designed to prevent interference by party or boss in the selection of a nominee. The replacement of backroom party caucuses with formalized procedures was similarly designed to make the nominating process accessible to anyone.

WHILE THE SUBSTANTIVE REFORMER believes social and economic inequity can be corrected through government action, the procedural reformer assumes that changes in the rules governing the legislative and political process will result in a system that generates public trust, and in which no group has special advantage. But these attempts to open the party often do serve to increase access to

power and profit for an elite segment of the middle class.

These suspicions are buttressed by the fact that many of the reforms, reflecting anti-Watergate and anti-Nixon sentiment, are weakening the ability of Democratic elected officials to line up majorities behind their proposals. In Congress an extraordinary shift in power has taken place, based on seniority, away from Southern conservatives toward Northern and liberal senators and congressmen sympathetic to legislation benefiting urban interests, blacks, labor, and almost every element of the Democratic coalition. At the extreme, the shift is represented by the replacement of James Eastland by Edward Kennedy as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Only 15 years ago, conservative Southerners chaired 22 out of 35 House and Senate committees; this year, generally liberal Northerners will chair 20 out of 28 congressional committees.

The elevation of these men represents the institutionalization of power in the hands of chairmen who represent what has been the mainstream of the Democratic party. With the remaining committees held by Southerners, and the growing seniority of blacks, it would seem that power has been distributed in a manner closely paralleling the constituency of the Democratic party itself. But just as the institutionalized power is coalescing, reforms instituted in large part by those who claim to be progressives have seriously damaged the ability of the congressional Democratic party to function. The proliferation of subcommittees—there are now 279 in the House and Senate—was designed to encourage specialized knowledge but, in political terms, it has given every member of the Senate and every member of the House with a minimum of four years' seniority a subcommittee chairmanship. The subcommittee system, in turn, weakens the leaders' power to control the flow of legislation and gives each junior member a turf of his own, almost entirely independent of the liberal leadership. Elected only in 1974, Gladys Noon Spellman (D-Md.), for example, has assumed the chairmanship of the subcommittee on federal employee benefits; this position has produced for her \$40,000 in contributions from interest groups directly under her committee's jurisdiction. In almost every case, subcommittees serve a specific constituency of interest groups, which in turn assures the subcommittee chairman of a financial resource that insulates the incumbent both from local electoral challenge and pressure by the leadership.

Similarly, the growth of staff and office services, particularly computer services, has provided even the most junior member of the House with 18 employees, whose first job it is to make sure their boss is reelected, with a communications system providing an extraordinary capacity to respond quickly, and often effectively, to constituent requests. These are benefits that cannot be taken away by the Speaker or anyone else, and they consequently serve to prevent the leadership from exercising significant control over the political future of the members. The proposed expansion of public financing would have an almost identical effect.

There is also strong evidence that the consequences of tinkering with the elective process often differ vastly from the intended goal. The 1974 election-law reforms were, for example, widely seen as an attempt to control the abuses of the electoral system by businessmen seeking special favors in return for massive contributions. To prevent the corrupt practices that prevailed in the 1972 Nixon campaign, reformers institutionalized the Political Action Committee (PAC). PAC was seemingly an ideal reformer's concept: under carefully prescribed rules, individuals could join together to form a group that would be allowed to contribute more—\$5,000 to a specific candidate—than the maximum permitted to individuals—\$1,000.

What are the results? The two social-economic units best equipped to form a PAC are the corporation and the trade association. The number of corporate PACs financing federal elections has grown from 89 in 1974 to 812 as of January 1979. In the same period, the number of trade-organized PACs grew from 318 to 529. Organized labor PACs, in contrast, have remained relatively stagnant, growing from 201 to 275. "We created a monster," says Russell Hemenway, director of the Committee for an Effective Congress and one of the principal reform authors of the election law.

More important, however, are the compound effects of the spawning of the business and trade association PACs. The PACs provided an ideal organizing tool just at a time (1974-76) when business was preparing a massive effort to counter the election of a Democratic president.

Under the old, corrupt system, corporations were encouraged to compete for special government benefits—Pepsi Cola for the Russian franchise under Nixon, for example. Now the PAC approach encourages businesses to join together as a class to press their common interest. Their goals

are class benefits—defeat of the labor-law reform bill or reduced capital-gains taxes—instead of the less significant advantages granted one corporation over another.

Finally, the business PACs have created a new source of campaign contributions for members of Congress that allow them to become increasingly independent of the leadership. While Tip O'Neill and other prominent Democrats were pressing members of the House to vote for the common situs-picketing bill and against weakening amendments to the minimum wage law, junior members were discovering that votes against labor would produce increased campaign contributions. The danger, then, of legislative "reform" is that the most powerful forces in the system will best be able to make use of it. The Freedom of Information Act is used far less by the press and public interest groups than by corporations seeking to discover information about competitors and regulation.

The kind of reform that has worked to benefit the poor is generally the simplification of the elective process: the exact opposite of the rule-making drive of middle-class reformers. Steady simplification of voter registration and prohibiting the poll tax worked to expand the franchise for the Democratic left constituency—blacks, poor, transient workers. Election-day registration, a proposition killed last year in Congress by a coalition of supposed reformers and Republicans, would have provided at least the opportunity for a massive expansion of the electorate, most of it from the lower half of the economic spectrum.

All this suggests that the peculiar blend of social and economic forces that went into creating a left-leaning Democratic majority is dependent on politics in the crass but beneficent sense. This Democratic constituency has been held together by the glue of favoritism, compromise, deals, rewards for the loyal, and penalties for those who fail to toe the line. The emergence of a middle-class, rule-making style of politics threatens the unstated consensus that government has a primary responsibility for its worst off. Minorities require a system that bends, unfettered by rules, to provide benefits and to force some redistribution of economic resources, which would face almost certain defeat if put up to public referendum.

POLITICALLY, this appears to be a period of realignment. The older cities in the North and Midwest are losing population, and their political leverage is shifting to the suburbs, and to the Sunbelt and the West. Jews and blacks no longer

have the political unity of 15 years ago, and the labor movement is stagnating. Continued inflation and the declining power of the U.S. in the world have reduced public confidence in government, an essential ingredient in the Democratic faith.

Through public financing and encouragement of antipolitical campaigning, reform has helped saddle the Democratic party with a President lacking substantive vision. The reform-inspired diffusion of congressional power has created a system of nearly 535 fiefdoms, each functioning more to prevent than to enact bills. The Democratic party as a vehicle for coherent policy has been decimated by reforms eliminating its fund-raising and vote-gathering functions, and it has largely been replaced by a network of private consulting and polling firms without partisan or community ties.

One result is a power vacuum. This vacuum has been partly filled by the middle class, with the substance of its politics a self-interested protectionism: legislative lids on the property tax; no new social programs; revision of income taxes at the expense of the working class and the poor; an approach to politics that places priority on maintaining advantages already gained and perceives any expansion of government as a threat. In full bloom, this amounts to the most restrictive elements of "classical liberalism": the government that governs least governs best. The procedural

reformers are, in effect, functioning to produce substantive shifts to the right.

This assist to the ideological right was, in most cases, not the intended effect of reform. Members of Common Cause pressing for enactment of public financing saw a danger in the influence gained by major private contributors and did not anticipate the consequences of their proposals. Attacks on patronage and favoritism are based on the belief that the political system should be based on merit. But this approach failed to recognize that *special interests are, in fact, integral to the system*: that a supposedly fair system controlled by detailed rules works to the advantage of those best equipped to interpret and maneuver within the rules; and that in a country without a clear ideology, minorities must seek governmental protection in the form of special benefits.

Similar consequences can be expected from a number of additional changes now under consideration. Public financing of congressional elections would have consequences very similar to presidential public financing. Abolition of the electoral college and establishment of national or regional party primaries would both reduce the need for candidates to address specific concerns of major voting blocks within states—blocks that nationally are only minorities (blacks in Mississippi; the coal miners of West Virginia; the old-line pols of Illinois, New Jersey, and Maryland). Important in a given state, those minorities would become elective liabilities in a campaign geared entirely to a national constituency.

Over the past decade, however, the movement for procedural reform has gone beyond a response to specific events and become a permanent institution. On Capitol Hill, Common Cause lobbyists lurk in the halls more often than lobbyists for the oil industry. Advocacy of reform has become a sure ploy to gain publicity for junior members who in the past were relegated to years of anonymity. The backroom negotiators who ran the Democratic party have been replaced by specialists—most often lawyers—trained in the interpretation of rules. These form a political subculture with a vested interest in expanding procedural reform, regardless of its effect on national trends. The functional, but not deliberate, alignment of the reform movement with the middle class and the decline in the political leverage of minorities suggest that the conservative turn of the 95th Congress is not merely transitory. Without a new vigor on the left, doubtful at present, the 96th Congress is likely to turn further to the right. □

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Joseph Clark

The Kennedys — and Their Enemies

Though it is doubtful that the earth, or even the country, shall rise on New Foundations right away, it is certain that the presidential campaign now is on. Our country endures longer campaigns than any other democracy. No sooner does the President present a budget in early 1979 than battle lines are drawn for the 1980 contest. Republicans, sensing a conservative trend, get an incredible symbol, John B. Connally, of Watergate, Vietnam, and slush-fund fame, as he flings an expensive hat into the ring so early.

Combat between right and left shapes up as much within as between the parties. This is to be expected since another tradition holds sway, that the parties eschew ideological straitjackets. So the campaign will be waged in large measure within the two parties. Who's on the right and who's on the left may be at times as difficult to answer as the "Who's on first" conundrum of Abbot and Costello.

The President's budget proposals have served to define divisions between conservative and liberal positions. The military establishment would receive increased support, not only in inflated dollars but at least a real 3 percent booster shot, and this increase would be paid for in part by those least able to do so. Most liberals were not arguing against NATO commitments and adequate defense in an unruly world, what with the Soviet Union showing its customary ability to fish in the muddy waters of the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia; but they are saying that billions are being wasted in the name of defense.

On the national scene, Senator Kennedy has been the most outspoken champion of the Democratic 1976 platform. He dramatized the challenge by charging that the Carter budget proposals were unfair to "the poor, the black, the sick, the young, the cities, and the unemployed." Fire from the right, just as sharply against Carter, came from the Republicans who objected to social expenditures no matter how parsimonious. Some of the attacks from the right have taken on an almost hysterical timbre. The most extreme, at this

writing, is an abusive assault on Kennedy in the form of a review of Arthur M. Schlesinger's recent book, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, by Midge Decter in *Commentary*, December 1978. She is sure about the forthcoming Kennedy candidacy for president, primarily because of the appearance of this book. She sees the book as part of a plot to bring "Kennedyism" (whatever that is) into the limelight. This is the sinister purpose of the book, even though it deals at great length with Robert Kennedy, to some extent with John Kennedy, and hardly at all with Edward Kennedy.

I think Schlesinger's biography is an important and extremely informative book. A tribute to its factual strength comes unwittingly from Decter herself. While sneering at Schlesinger's detailed history based on personal interviews, public papers, and the author's private diaries, in no instance does she challenge any of the facts or cite a single inaccuracy in this 915-page work.

THERE ARE AT LEAST three reasons why this book serves a useful purpose. First, the story it presents of highlights in the 15 unusual years from 1953 to 1968. This vivid account includes old and new information about the investigations of Hoffa and the crime syndicate, the infamous story of J. Edgar Hoover, the civil rights battles of the '60s, the Bay of Pigs and the nuclear missile confrontation with the U.S.S.R., and then the shadow over the entire period—Vietnam. Second, the book answers a question that mystifies many people, why so many hard-headed liberals and radicals were captivated by Bobby Kennedy. And third, this is a solid book about our country's politics, about how political campaigns are won or lost, and how those who see politics as a means of achieving social progress can participate in the political process.

Many people disliked Robert Kennedy, but some of the hatred he earned can be cherished, such as the authoritative word in the FBI "that the two in the world J. Edgar Hoover hated most were Martin Luther King second and Robert Kennedy first." It's an eye-opener to learn that, under Hoover, the FBI was indifferent to organized crime and that, in 1959, the FBI New York office "had over 400 agents working on communism, four on organized crime." This, after 90 percent of the CP's membership had left the party and in some places dues were being maintained partly by FBI agents. Very much to Schlesinger's credit as a historian, and to the discredit of both President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, is the sordid story of the

electronic spying on Martin Luther King. The shabby excuse that King's aide, Stanley Levison, was a Soviet agent is exploded by Schlesinger's detailed account. When taps on Levison's phone "produced no evidence of Communist devilry . . . this only showed, the Bureau replied, what a truly secret muckamuck he was."

Perhaps the fury of some *Commentary* writers about the Kennedys is set off by their role in sponsoring affirmative action. Was it, possibly, the support given by both the President and Attorney General Kennedy for the 1963 March on Washington? Or was it the kind of testimony Robert Kennedy presented to the Congress on the need for civil-rights legislation:

The United States is dominated by white people, politically and economically. The question is whether we, in this position of dominance, are going to have not the charity but the wisdom to stop penalizing our fellow citizens whose only fault or sin is that they were born. That is why Congress should enact this bill

The story of the missile crisis of 1962 reveals the two contrasting but complementary aspects of American policy in the Kennedy administration. The Soviet aim was described by Mikoyan at a secret meeting of Communist diplomats: to achieve "a definite shift in the power relationship between the socialist and the capitalist worlds." Since this was to be done by placing large numbers of nuclear missiles on Cuban soil, with nuclear bombers and 22,000 Soviet troops and technicians attending, the threat required, and the administration responded with, firmness. But the generals were clamoring to bomb the missile sites in Cuba. In those circumstances Robert Kennedy helped devise the conciliatory steps that made it possible for the Soviets to agree to withdraw their nuclear weapons and arrive at a peaceful resolution of the most dangerous confrontation in this nuclear age. If the incident holds out a lesson for today it surely is that military firmness toward the Soviet Union can only be one side, and the less important side, of American policy. Efforts to seek limits and, more important, reduction and elimination of the nuclear arms race are matters of urgent concern. To read the one-sided appeals of the retired generals and then hear Norman Podhoretz on a TV program urging us on to an armament race, to greater toughness, greater nuclear-bomb competition is to wonder about the sanity of such hawks.

What about the mesmerizing effect Robert

Kennedy seemed to exercise over so many veteran critics of "the establishment"? Perhaps it relates to the stance that Kennedy sought to define for our country in opposing totalitarianism, especially in Asia, Africa, Latin America. Coming back from a trip to Asia, Kennedy mused: "I kept asking myself what a conservative could possibly say to these people. I could talk all the time about social welfare and trade unions and reform; but what could someone say who didn't believe in these things? Can you imagine—Barry Goldwater in Indonesia?"

Perhaps this relates to Kennedy's record regarding Vietnam. President Kennedy, as Schlesinger notes, left a divided legacy regarding Vietnam. On the one hand, he sent combat advisers to aid the South Vietnamese; on the other he opposed escalation and turned down the generals' proposals to send combat troops. After February 7, 1965, when the Vietcong overran the airfield at Pleiku, "Johnson now made the decision to Americanize the war." The bombing of North Vietnam was on. Kennedy opposed it and Schlesinger describes how, "Late in April," Lyndon Johnson recorded, "Bobby Kennedy came to see me" to urge a bombing pause. The President assured him it was under consideration. But what was really under consideration was large-scale escalation and the beginning of huge appropriations for war in Vietnam. When Johnson escalated the war, Kennedy delivered an address, in July 1965, strongly opposing the Americanization of the war. The history of the last 20 years, Kennedy said, had demonstrated "beyond doubt that our approach to revolutionary war must be political—political first, political last, political always. Victory in a revolutionary war is won not by escalation, but by de-escalation." When, by far, majority sentiment supported U.S. intervention in Vietnam, in 1965, Kennedy opposed it. He went so far as to defend the right of students—even though he said he disagreed with that type of action—to burn draft cards.

Or perhaps Robert Kennedy won the admiration of the radicals by giving the back of his hand to know-nothing and jingoist attitudes, and by opposing atrocities committed in the name of "fighting communism." In January 1966 Kennedy said: "We have spoken out against inhuman slaughters perpetrated by the Nazis and the Communists. But will we speak out also against inhuman slaughter in Indonesia, where over 100,000 alleged Communists have been not perpetrators, but victims?" Around the same time

the Defense Department denied burial in Arlington cemetery to Robert Thompson, an American Communist party leader. Though a hard-line Stalinist to the end, Thompson had been a hero in two wars, in Spain against Franco and in New Guinea in 1943, when he won the Distinguished Service Cross. Kennedy, again alone, denounced the Defense Department's action on the floor of the Senate. He told Schlesinger later, "I don't think anyone now buried in Arlington would object to having Thompson buried there, so I don't see why all these living people are objecting."

Kennedy certainly endeared himself to me at the time of the Junius Scales case. Scales had been the only Communist sent to prison under the membership clause of the infamous Smith Act. He was serving a long prison sentence even though no longer in the party. (He had condemned the invasion of Hungary.) Norman Thomas and Joseph Rauh organized a campaign for his release. J. Edgar Hoover was demanding that there be no clemency for Scales as long as he refused to name names, and that Scales was not about to do. Scales was released for Christmas 1962 and Rauh described Kennedy's action:

The act of granting clemency to Scales without his "cooperation" by "naming names" is a repudiation of the loyalty test long used by the FBI. . . . For the first time since the rise of McCarthyism an Attorney General has refused to treat a man's unwillingness to inform on others as a ground for withholding favorable government action in his case.

The Kennedy brothers have used their leadership to espouse liberal positions, positions that could be carried only by uniting disparate constituencies. When Bobby Kennedy was winning the primary race in Indiana in his race for the 1968 presidential nomination he inspired both blacks and blue-collar whites to get together, to try unity instead of separation.

The political battles for civil rights, for organizing the farm workers, for ending the war in Vietnam, against the dangers of authoritarian trends revealed by Watergate, all were hard to wage. There were many setbacks along the way. Too many veterans of the '60s got tired. By the middle of the '70s nearly a quarter of a century of unprecedented economic growth was interrupted by depression and inflation, by the horrid advent of stagflation. How do radicals function in politics when so much cries out for solution and so little is done? To dream about utopia is one attitude.

FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS the electoral activities of socialists centered on the candidacies of Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas. Nostalgic recollections of the "Red Special" may be warming but hardly constitute a guide for political action. Those socialists, liberals, and labor activists who cast their lot with the New Deal in the '30s inaugurated a new tradition that has brought tangible gains to working people and minorities. The Democratic Conference and Democratic Agenda people who fought for national health insurance and other liberal positions at the Democratic party's Midterm conference in Memphis continued that tradition. The assault from the right will certainly be escalated as we move toward the 1980 elections. Governor Brown would like to challenge Carter in the primaries. Perhaps if Carter gives signs of facing defeat Ted Kennedy might be prevailed upon to enter the race.

Kennedy has already exercised pressure on the Carter administration and rallied together with labor and the black movement to stem the rightward trend. It is possible that the right wing has overreached in attempting to expand welfare measures for the wealthy while slashing them for the poor. Also, that the impact of Senator Kennedy's action for health insurance, supported by the labor movement, will move the Carter administration to remember and to implement the entire 1976 Democratic platform.

If the economic news worsens, Robert Lekachman may be proved a prophet since he suggests that "congressional liberals will take heart, win allies among the moderates, and substitute some progressive measures for the social sabotage now projected." Whatever his political future, Kennedy has shown the ability to form the kind of coalitions that have helped labor, the blacks, the poor, the young, the old, and the deprived to move forward. Workers today have a good deal to lose. Perhaps it's not a *world* they'll be winning, but the progress of past decades may be resumed in the '80s. More of a welfare state, not less, is the answer to the problems of recession and unemployment. True price, interest and profit, and wage controls would seem the answer to inflation. None of these is beyond the reach of politics even in a time of Proposition 13. Michael Harrington has written and Schlesinger quotes him about Robert Kennedy: "As I look back on the '60s, he was the only man who actually could have changed the course of American history." There are others who may rise to that need, including Carter and Kennedy, as the '70s come to an end. □

Dick Howard

The University on the Market

Open the Sunday *New York Times*, and you'll see three or four pages combine the tactics of advertising with the wisdom of the universities. What will draw you in? Advance at work? Occupying your leisure time? Meeting glamorous people (or professors, politicians, or bureaucrats)? Self-knowledge? Discovery of hidden resources you've never known? You can have evening courses, weekend courses, even courses for the early riser; try a minicourse or a weekend retreat; or, if you live on Long Island, you can take business courses offered on commuter trains. Do you need a diploma? Credits are offered for "life experience" (half tuition is better than none). Are you bored, frustrated, in doubt? The university offers a revaluation of all values, in an idyllic atmosphere where you can chat leisurely about the great and small ideas shaking the world or your neighbors. And all this takes place through courses renamed for the occasion: since departmental funds are allocated on a per-head basis, a veritable race has begun: who will invent the most tempting packaging for whatever academic fare he or she will offer?

There appears to be a double crisis in the American university. False predictions and great investments led to increased plant and faculty during the '60s, when the demographic curve had already begun to sink. Two strategies have emerged to confront this situation. Competition among universities for a share of the youth pool, and/or extension of the university beyond the usual age groups, thus realizing in a sense the dream of a permanent education. In both cases, the university has to change its agenda, ideals, and methods. This is where the economic crisis is transformed and becomes a crisis of values.

The '60s were years of a wrenching and deep reform of the university—a reform not chosen or planned by the university. During the civil rights movement and the struggle against (and in) the war in Vietnam, a generation developed a new self-awareness and drove the university to transformation. "*In loco parentis*" fell rather quickly and with little regret, but its demise was followed by a growing number of required or prerequisite courses. No longer did one need to know foreign

languages, to have a few insights about math or science (or to dip a bit into the humanities and social sciences); no longer did one even need English composition, where one would have to show a capacity to write a grammatical sentence or even a few properly organized paragraphs. This was the age of "relevance," of knowledge for action, and for action *now*. It wasn't so iconoclastic or nihilistic as it appears today: the members of this generation became aware that under the pretense of a classical education they were being cheated out of knowledge about what was happening around them. Not Machiavelli but Marx was needed; not Roman history but that of blacks or women; not Viennese hysterics but the neurotics of a perhaps lost generation that was nonetheless seeking itself. The reform of the '60s could be understood—and was—as a victory of the New Left. But it was perhaps too easy a contest.

There were, however, other aspects to this overthrow of tradition. The idea of relevance lent itself quickly to that of relativity. All values are equal; as long as you have one, it is yours and thus good. The critique of the monolithic traditional education, remembering what it had forgotten and what it had neglected, gave rise to a pluralism. But since values cannot be compared among themselves (in this view anyway), and because tradition was rejected *en bloc*, the university began to tear itself to pieces. This was not the intention of those who had forced its reform; they wanted a university from which would come a continual and self-reflective critique of the capitalist society in which the university was anchored and which it could ignore only at its own peril. But the critique became balkanized. We now have not only feminist, black, Jewish, or Puerto Rican studies, but the growth of a new mysticism correlating with the ambient relativism. Finally, we are seeing the establishment of new "Chairs of Free Enterprise," since capitalism appears not to be getting its own bit of turf. Whether this was the inevitable result of the reforms or not, and whoever is to be blamed—those who gave in too easily, those who forced the issue by any and all means, or those who could not find innovative compromises—what is significant

is the way in which the relativist, balkanized, tradition-less university fits the present competitive climate on the pedagogical marketplace.

IT'S NOT TRUE that you can't turn the clock back, or at least try. The old university has begun to shake itself from its torpor: Harvard has reevaluated the curriculum, and the return to tradition will begin. Many profs would like to follow the lead—not just from “conservatism,” but out of the frustration that accumulates when your students come to class with heterogeneous backgrounds, unequal preparation, and without the ability to write a coherent sentence! But, outside the elite universities, one wonders whether the Harvard plan makes (economic) sense.

In the face of the economic crisis, new aid has been proposed, from an unlikely source: the Department of Defense! The Department of Defense has a director of “defense education,” Mr. Thomas Carr, who is just as aware of the competitive struggle for youthful bodies as any college administrator. The army too needs 18-year-olds; indeed, says Mr. Carr, it will need one out of every three of them over the next five to ten years if it is to keep its active-duty forces at 2.1 million. Mr. Carr proposes a compromise solution, which comes down to offering to buy a piece of the action. This is perhaps not surprising; but his rationalization is. He stresses the twin problems of inadequate secondary preparation, and the debilitating effect that the competitive, hierarchical university structure imposes on students. The military can deal with both problems, since it is essentially anti-hierarchical, concerned not with excellence and the like, but with getting-the-job-done.

Military involvement with the university will thus be able to avoid the discouragement that leads to dropouts while keeping the university financially afloat and helping it to perform the egalitarian function it is supposed to perform.

Mr. Carr's egalitarian rhetoric, one might note, accords well with that of the New Left reformers during the '60s. At the same time, however, he does have to admit that, besides a share of the body count, the military will derive a further benefit from its investment: it will be able to use the hierarchical practices of the university for recruiting future officers. In short, to the administrative mind it sounds like a good deal is being offered: the rhetoric is right, the funds are there, and hierarchy is only downpeddled, not eliminated.

If this help is not needed by the nostalgic elite schools, or the pridefully stubborn, is it the fate awaiting the extraordinary system of state universities begun just after the Civil War by the Homestead Act? That system survived the attacks of McCarthy, of Nixon and Company, and went on to be one of the sources from which a new spirit emerged in the '60s. Good Marxists might explain (or explain away) this persistence and growth in terms of the needs of capitalist industry and/or neocapitalist commercialization—and they would not be wrong. But there is more involved. Just as the famous commodity with which *Capital* begins has two faces, so also does the university have its contradictory visage.

THE PRESENT CRISIS of the university cannot be blamed on the economy, or on demography alone. The revolt of the '60s was the leaven that transformed an adaptation that might have been dealt with administratively and brought to a full-fledged crisis of values. I have said that this was not the intent of the rebels. Could—or should—they have done differently? The usual answer points to their nihilism and cult of immediacy, suggesting that a better theoretical understanding would have changed their practical proposals. But what theoretical understanding? Marxism, of course, suggests itself.

But I think there is another optic. There is another history besides the one that takes class struggle as its starting point and revolution as the end of the route. There is a history of democratization, and the university has a place in that process. Perhaps it is Humboldt in Germany, Durkheim in France, or Dewey in America who need to be rethought?

From this perspective of democratization, the problems of the university are a sign of health. The nostalgia of Harvard and the egalitarian mutual aid offered by the Department of Defense misunderstand the issue, as do those who condemn the '60s whole cloth. All that publicity about which I spoke somewhat mockingly at the outset is perhaps not so venal. Perhaps grotesque, laughable, or frustrating for the nostalgic or the revolutionary (whose curious agreement on the nature of the university is worth noting), it forces us to think about the role of the university in a democracy, where it can neither avoid the present and the traditions that have made that present nor abdicate its unique role. From the point of view, then, of democracy as a process, the rebels of the '60s made their contribution. □

Nukes, Oil, and Politics

Here is a group of comments on the vexing issues of nuclear power, oil deregulation, energy options, and attendant political issues. These comments represent a range of opinions within and beyond Dissent; we will be glad to print others in future issues. The problems raised here are urgent and complex; only a few people would even claim to be absolutely certain about solutions. — Eds.

David Bromwich

A High Standard of Dying

On March 28, the water used to cool a “containment vessel” in the atomic plant at Three Mile Island, in Middletown, Pennsylvania, grew dangerously hot and gave every sign of growing hotter. The consequences were as follows. The company that owned the plant, Metropolitan Edison, did everything it could to solve the problem quietly, and in the process released large quantities of radioactive material into the air and water surrounding the plant. Their efforts having proved an utter failure, they reported the accident several hours late to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which in turn allowed two days to pass before dispatching a team of experts to the site. In adding a delay of its own to that of Metropolitan Edison, the NRC appears to have been actuated by the same motive: the smaller the fuss over the accident, the less considerable the danger would seem in retrospect. The NRC team on arriving at the site found something approaching total chaos. From the mass of contradictory reports, however, it finally emerged that the worst imaginable calamity for a nuclear plant—a “core meltdown,” which would release into the air a radioactive cloud, killing tens of thousands and injuring hundreds of thousands more, within a radius of at least 50 miles—had become a not

entirely remote possibility. Governor Thornburgh ordered the evacuation of children and pregnant mothers within a five-mile radius, and President Carter went on television urging the residents of nearby areas not to panic. With hundreds of experts coming to the rescue of Metropolitan Edison, the likelihood of a meltdown was in a week reduced to almost nothing, and the evacuees were told by their Governor to come home.

As the public came to know its ignorance of nuclear physics it was also acquiring a new knowledge of the realities of corporate survival. Whether that knowledge will ever be converted into action remains uncertain; but now we have all seen with a terrible vividness how any corporation tends to act in obedience to laws as clear and distinct as those that govern physics; and we know that these laws demand profits first and profits above all, even at the sacrifice of human life. Metropolitan Edison strove to keep its public image in good repair, and therefore was obliged to suppress information and imperil its neighbors and customers, to the verge of disaster; Governor Thornburgh, President Carter, and the NRC conducted themselves from beginning to end *as if they were acting on behalf of Metropolitan Edison*. And this has to happen, wherever politicians are as

much committed to corporate life as corporations are to the life of profit-making.

On Three Mile Island, a moment came when one of two things had to be done: either the ordering of a serious evacuation—as far out at least as Harrisburg, with its half a million inhabitants—to protect as many lives as possible while risking a vote of no confidence for the utility; or the postponement of such an evacuation, with a vote of confidence for the utility and the concomitant risk of thousands of lives. Thornburgh and Carter agreed on the second course of action and, when their luck held out, were duly congratulated for their cool-headedness. While Carter issued his message of reassurance to Pennsylvanians, the chairman of the NRC, Joseph Hendrie, was describing himself as a blind man staggering to find his way, and it now appears that Carter himself was ignorant of the risk he took in going to Middletown. Still, had he known more about the odds, he would undoubtedly have acted as he did. He has the courage of his convictions—his conduct at this level is not in question—and why should he not risk his own life while risking thousands of others? Given his sympathy for the interests associated with nuclear energy, asking him to do otherwise would be like asking water to run uphill.

We do not know exactly what caused the hydrogen bubble to form, and what brought it down was guesswork. To quote Senator Gary Hart: “We were lucky.” We owe it to ourselves to pause a moment over the nightmare, before allowing it to fade into the day’s routine of unfinished business. What, then, if our luck had been a little poorer? Thornburgh told us of a plan for last-minute evacuation, which he was prepared to implement only in the event of a disaster. As reported in the *New York Times*, his plan called for the evacuation of as many as 600,000 persons. We were thus to understand that he required a two-day advance warning from Three Mile Island; yet disasters have a way of coming unannounced, with very sketchy credentials: those who knew about meltdowns said we would be lucky to get 12 hours for our escape. Thornburgh’s plan depended largely on the use of private vehicles along the public highways—and this, with a population that had received no prior instruction about what to do in an emergency like the one they might face. Many of those living in areas near the site would be likely not to comply with an order to evacuate, because many of them did not know how much they had to fear. As for those who had no cars, or got flat tires on the way, or ran out of gas (gas stations were shut

down, to save every last drop for the exodus)—well, in the words of a Civil Defense official long after the crisis had passed, “They’d die of course. We’re only worried about the survivors.” The horrifying ineptness of this plan, and apparently of all such plans, where they exist at all, is the final consequence of a nuclear energy policy committed at every step of its development to the suppression of facts. “Keep them confused,” said President Eisenhower; and they have kept us confused.

IT WAS NECESSARY not to warn us about the possibility of an evacuation from contaminated areas, because to do so would make us think twice about allowing the reactors to be built. And if evacuations were unthinkable to begin with, how could we be trained to carry them out sensibly and humanely? Tracing the logic of the situation to its first premise, we would doubtless arrive at this: most people do not know what radioactive fallout is, or what it can do. That is why they countenance a gamble with hundreds of thousands of lives, to preserve the faith in a politician’s consistency—for a little while, on one issue, anyway—and to sustain the unexamined belief in a company’s right to continued existence and undiminished profits. The public is naturally ignorant, and does nothing to change its condition; if it were different, it would cease to be a public. But in the debate over nuclear energy its ignorance has been deepened by the systematic evasion and systematic fraud of its supposed benefactors. We have been witnessing a crime 30 years long, against the people of the United States, by a government that serves one master at election time but deserts it ever after for another, whose payments are more visible and more constant. On the “life-and-death questions,” the government acts not as a picked body of representatives belonging to the people, but as a pragmatic outwork of the corporations themselves.

In the recent crisis, nothing illustrated this so plainly as the conduct of the NRC; and what we have begun to learn of its past conduct is in perfect keeping with what we saw. Other regulatory agencies have served to dramatize the abuses of corporate license in America, by bringing the offenders to the bar of justice, or at least to the headlines. The NRC on the contrary looks on the nuclear industry with all the sly solicitude of a lawyer contriving “breaks” for his wealthiest client: the public is the potential antagonist from whom the client must be sheltered. NRC inspections have been far from thorough, by the standards we ought

to apply to a regulatory agency responsible for death-dealing instruments; even so they have detected thousands of violations and yet seldom resulted in anything beyond minimal fines; they have allowed corners to be cut, and Three Mile Island was one of the corners.

When a meltdown began to seem possible in the first week of April, a single incident brought out the contrast between the ideas of regulation entertained by the NRC and by a well-established and genuinely conscientious agency. The FDA, it was reported, shipped 250,000 bottles of medicine to Pennsylvania, to counteract the effects of radioactive iodine: work on the medicine had begun as soon as the first radiation leaks were heard of. About this time, Hendrie (a Carter appointee) was asking which amendment in the Bill of Rights guaranteed freedom of the press—and cursing it, whichever one it was. When not offering diversions of this sort, he kept himself busy concealing from Thornburgh any information that might have a disheartening sound.

Yet the transcripts of the NRC's meetings revealed stark differences within the commission. At an especially tense moment Hendrie wanted to know how fast he could print up business cards. Roger Mattson, on the other hand—director of the commission's division of safety—felt the misgivings we all wished could have a voice: "I'm not sure why you are not moving people. Got to say it. I have been saying it down here. I don't know what we are protecting at this point. I think we ought to be moving people" (*New York Times*, April 14). The answer to Mattson's question—Whom are we protecting?—was in fact implied in Hendrie's question about printing up business cards. But the NRC may recover something of its proper authority if it takes the course suggested by those of its members who can imagine the results of a last-ditch evacuation—the lines at gas stations, the jammed freeways, the sporadic or contagious violence, the old and the bewildered and the immovable left behind, and the fatal cloud all the while advancing at its own speed. This picture, to those of us who can imagine it—this, and the knowledge of what fallout did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for months after the bombs were dropped—makes the comparisons with floods, air disasters, and the like seem a display of unresisting idiocy, when it is not conscious deception. It makes Joseph Califano's toying with numbers—one cancer in so many years, ten in so many years, "the estimates may keep rising"—something worse than callousness, something a little like depravity. The

truth is, *we know what it would feel like*; and we can imagine nothing worse, short of nuclear war.

PERHAPS, AFTER ALL, imagination is the hidden issue of the debate. Once the public has been educated, it must still be told: *imagine what this would feel like*. We must cultivate, since our lives depend on it, what only the specialists of the imagination are supposed to have, "a disposition to be affected by absent things as if they were present." This is a difficult art and instruction in it may be hard to come by; but at least some instructive negative examples can be borne in mind. We can try not to be like President Carter, the unembarrassed personification of technological optimism, a "tough-minded" pragmatist of the sort not to be imposed on by facts, reciting to himself and for us to overhear: "I was a nuclear engineer. Nothing surprises me. All shall be well." Or James Schlesinger, welcoming the accident as a new and unlooked-for opportunity to retrieve information about the behavior of molecules in times of crisis. Or George Will, announcing the infallibility of nuclear energy the day before the accident, pursuing his campaign a week later with unabated severity for his opponents—and for himself an indulgent smile and a debonair complacency for which it would be hard to find any precedent, even in the columnist's trade. All of these men have exhibited a fondness for theory and an immunity to evidence that ought to be enough to get them drummed out of their jobs. But it cannot be done: two of them are professors of moral philosophy, the third a seasoned adept of the "think tank." We treat them with respect.

They will continue to determine our policies, and hold our lives in the balance, until we rid ourselves of the demon that makes them strong. And the demon's name is, The Standard of Living. Americans are used to a certain standard, and many of them expect it to rise throughout their lives. This makes them great lookers-out for the main chance, but, in the long run, enemies of their own survival. It leads straight to the headline for a *New York Times* story of May 7: "Most Unions' Leaders Still Favor Building Atom Plants to Get Jobs." The plants cost a lot to build, and take a long time, and plenty of jobs can be filled in the interim. But on the other end they create fewer jobs than any other form of energy: a functioning plant needs only technicians in the control room and maintenance workers for the reactors. And we

dispose of the waste material in containers that are sure to last 40 years, and after 40 years a single pound of plutonium will still be enough to give 200 million persons cancer. The standard of living is the watchword of a society ready to consume everything including itself. If the standard of living means a town in Utah slowly dying of the cancer induced by old H-bomb tests, or Karen Silkwood dying in a mysterious auto accident before she can tell reporters about the danger of contamination at Kerr-McGee, then we need to give it up. We need, finally, to stop assuming that what is better is the

same thing as what is cheaper, next week, next month, or next year. And if this sounds like Jerry Brown's issue, then so much the worse for us—he is a demagogue, a *child*-demagogue, to whom nothing is real except the next vote—and we had better take the issue away from him quickly. The consequences of what we do may appear to us slight; they will appear to our children significant. If we relax now and listen to the money, our standard of living will be the last testament of a society murmuring, to all who read between the lines: "I want to die." □

Peter Connolly

Ideology and the Politics of Energy

The varying reactions to Three Mile Island and to the impending decontrol of the price of domestically produced oil illuminate the shifting fault lines of American politics and provide a glimpse of what the '80s are likely to offer in the way of ideological conflict.

Until Three Mile Island, root-and-branch opposition to the development of nuclear power had largely been confined to that left fringe of American politics where lingering countercultural anticorporatism reinforced a small-is-beautiful reverence for an unspoiled ecosystem. The passions animating the Clamshell, Abalone, and related "alliances" had little authentic appeal to most urban radical intellectuals or liberal professionals, let alone progrowth leaders of organized labor. However, the Harrisburg hydrogen bubble, while failing to escape its containment vessel, nonetheless did manage to melt down the prior indifference of mainstream left-liberalism, thus establishing the nuclear power issue as one upon which it is now obligatory to have a viewpoint.

The political players have lined up in predictable positions. Starting on the right, the hierarchy of the Republican party has reaffirmed its commitment to better living through plutonium ingestion.

Washington, D.C.

Presidential candidates Crane, Connally, Reagan, Baker, and Bush have taken the usual position of their party, which is that anything generated by private enterprise, however noxious, must be either praised or explained away. Like the Northern Unionists who praised the therapeutic value of the smell of gunpowder for spineless youth at the beginning of the Civil War, spokesmen for present-day conservatism greeted Three Mile Island's "plume" of radioactive smoke with a fierce joy, as symbolizing the unavoidable and unpleasant realities that make life worth living. These sages also emphasized the stunning insights that life is complicated and that sometimes mutually exclusive choices must be made.

On the Democratic side of the field, things are more interesting. After some monetary wavering, the Henry Jackson/George Meany/Pat Moynihan wing of the party has remained in the pronuclear camp, along with the bulk of organized labor. This attitude may be generated as much by cultural hostility to bandana-wearers with a fondness for being carried into police vans as by any rational assessment of risks, costs, and benefits. Senator Jackson has gone so far as to reaffirm his support for a doomed bill to "streamline" and speed up the

licensing of nuclear plants, which he had the singular bad luck to propose a week before Three Mile Island.

LIKE THE VIETNAM intervention, nuclear power appears to be one of those issues on which the Democratic party's Southern contingent will quietly follow their President over a cliff. Senators like Sam Nunn of Georgia, Lawton Chiles of Florida, and Dale Bumpers of Arkansas are intelligent men who hold the respect of their colleagues; a skeptical statement about nuclear power from any of them would matter. But none has been forthcoming.

That leaves the liberals. So far, they have evolved two approaches to the issue. The first is the administrative-law approach. It currently takes 8 to 12 years to get a nuclear power plant licensed and operating. Senator Gary Hart of Colorado, chairman of the Subcommittee on Nuclear Regulation of the Environment and Public Works Committee, wants more federal control over reactor licensing and operation, which will certainly mean a lengthening of this time period. Senator Kennedy urges a separate federal agency to investigate nuclear accidents. On the House side, such foes of nuclear power as Representatives Ted Weiss (D.-N.Y.), Bob Carr (D-Mich.), and John Seiberling (D.-Ohio) argue for reexamination of the Price-Anderson Act, which limits the total liability for any nuclear accident to \$560 million.

Clearly, the most likely result of all these legislative initiatives will be to make the regulatory obstacle course for prospective nuclear plants even more lengthy and arduous than it is at present. There will be more hearings, more briefs, more interventions, and more appeals. Nuclear plants in operation are going to be far more closely supervised than they have been in the past.

The other liberal approach, still not quite respectable, calls for a moratorium on further nuclear development. Senator George McGovern has submitted legislation calling for such a moratorium.

Advocates of a moratorium tend to skirt the issue of what is to be done with existing nuclear plants. Nobody in Congress has, to my knowledge, yet argued that they should simply be shut down *en masse*.

Jerry Brown could make nuclear power an issue in presidential politics, given his characteristically erratic but on the whole antinuclear record. However, he is unlikely to use the issue against

Carter, since the fiscal conservatives whom he hopes to mobilize in such states as New Hampshire tend to be pronuclear.

Overlooked amidst the ideological sound and fury is the decisive factor in the entire controversy: because of political reasons, nuclear power is rapidly becoming a moribund technology. In 1977 and 1978, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission did not grant a single new nuclear plant license. There are now 71 nuclear plants operating in the United States and 94 under construction. They generate 13 percent of our electricity and 4 percent of our total energy. In the wake of Three Mile Island, eight plants are "temporarily" closing for repairs. It is likely that many additional plants will have to close for one reason or another and that many of the plants under construction will never be completed. Every day we have to consider more stories of radiation leaks, cancer dangers, and the inability of nuclear wastes to find a home. Most important, investors are fleeing from the risk and uncertainties of nuclear power. W. Donham Crawford, past president of Edison Electric Institute (an association of privately owned utilities), has said, "If the nuclear option in the United States is not already dead, it is surely in precarious health" (*National Journal*, April 28, 1979).

Most useful, perhaps, for the United States would be a "phased withdrawal" from nuclear power, accompanied by a minimum of moralizing about weakening national fiber on the one hand or the superiority of "organic" life on the other. Yet this is unlikely to occur, especially if the "Ban the Bomb" movement can be revived by tapping into "No Nukes" fervor.

THE POLITICS OF OIL reflect a similarly uncertain "fit" between reality and the needs of ideology.

At present, the United States consumes about 18 million barrels of oil per day. Approximately 50 percent of this consumption represents imported oil. This percentage has risen inexorably throughout the '70s, and it will continue to rise, especially as nuclear power becomes a less and less viable source of energy. The price of imported oil is, obviously, controlled only by the limits on OPEC's avarice. According to the *National Journal*, as of April 14, 1979, the current average delivered cost of all imported oil is approximately \$18 a barrel.

The remaining 50 percent of our stupendous daily consumption is of domestic oil. The price of about one-third of this oil, including Alaskan oil

and oil from wells yielding less than 10 barrels of oil per day ("stripper wells"), is essentially uncontrolled. The price of the remaining two-thirds of domestically produced oil has been controlled since 1973. Oil from wells that were producing in 1973 sells for about \$6 a barrel, and oil from post-1973 wells sells for an average of \$13 a barrel. The mechanisms by which individual barrels of oil are priced are insanely complicated and entail the nonproductive employment of legions of bureaucrats, accountants, and lawyers.

THE CURRENT PRICE-CONTROL law allows the President the option of ending existing controls before the law itself expires in 1981. This is what Carter has chosen to do. Controls will be lifted gradually, allowing the price charged for U.S. oil to rise to the world price by June 1981. By 1982, as a result of decontrol, the Administration estimates the oil companies will receive \$15.4 billion in increased revenues. The President proposes that Congress tax away approximately \$3.3 billion of this increased revenue in "windfall profits" taxes. About \$5.5 billion more would go to the federal government in normal corporate income taxes, and the state would receive an additional \$1 billion in taxes. The remainder, \$6 billion, would be retained by the oil companies.

The President proposes to devote the windfall-profits tax proceeds to subsidies to low-income families staggered by increased energy costs, to mass transit, and to the establishment of an "energy security fund," to be used to develop alternative energy sources such as coal, solar, gasohol, oil shale, and hydroelectric power. The Administration maintains that ending controls will yield 330,000 barrels a day in increased domestic production by 1981 and up to 800,000 barrels a day by 1985. Administration analysts also believe that increased prices will reduce consumption by 110,000 barrels per day by 1981, and by 250,000 barrels per day by 1985.

Carter's plan originally received support from a majority of members of Congress although opposition to it has increased, particularly among House Democrats as tempers grow shorter in gas-station lines.

The Republicans support decontrol and will work to weaken any excess profits tax by promoting "plowback," that is, allowing excess profits to be retained by the oil companies provided they are invested in energy research and development. More important, especially in the Senate, the

President has retained the backing of much of the Democratic party center and right, e.g., Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Russell Long. It is probable that decontrol will become a reality and that some form of excess profits tax will be enacted, though the amount of money such a tax will recapture is now impossible to predict. I would guess that when Ted Kennedy and Russell Long conclude their press-release war over the terms of the tax, the compromise result will look a good deal like the President's original proposal.

The left-wing reaction to impending decontrol has been an explosion of rage directed against the oil companies, Department of Energy Secretary Schlesinger, and Carter who is portrayed as their compliant tool. Decontrol, it is argued, will *not* increase production or reduce consumption. It will harm the poor and elderly and will unconscionably enrich the oil companies.

Those specific contentions are probably in large part correct. Gasoline prices have risen spectacularly since 1973 and consumption has not fallen, though its rate of increase has been markedly slowed. Most Americans drive because they have to, and they will do so no matter what the cost. Home heating oil use will not decline unless winters suddenly grow warmer. Liberals should make a top priority the fight for subsidies to protect the poor and elderly from future price increases of home heating oil. As a matter of domestic social policy, in aggregate, the most optimistically estimated gains from decontrol probably are not worth the costs of inflation and social injustice.

And yet, the left's reaction to Carter's program has been fundamentally inadequate. To read the *Nation* or to listen to Senators Metzenbaum and Durkin, one would think that our only energy problem is a phony "shortage" devised by the oil companies to make more money. Of course, the oil companies may be holding back some oil products, waiting for a better price. But the line between desirable inventory maintenance and undesirable hoarding is difficult to draw and rendered all the more difficult by the constant threat of foreign embargoes or cutbacks in production. More important, the industry's 10,000 independent "wildcatters" who dig the small wells that generate approximately 50 percent of our domestic production are openly waiting for a better price before they dig many more new wells.

This sort of behavior certainly is not up to the elevated moral standards of university faculties, public-interest law firms, or Congress. But leaving

aside the problem of how the government could possibly *force* such a reactionary and cantankerous group of individualists to produce more oil without giving them a higher price, this lack of virtue pales into insignificance in the face of the real problem, which is the long-term political and economic consequences of excessive dependence on OPEC oil.

Carter is at least trying, perhaps misguidedly, to increase domestic energy production, reduce consumption, and increase the amount we spend on alternative energy research and development. What the left's implicit program amounts to in reality is merely a continuation of the process by which we have become ever more dependent on foreign oil. And virtually no prominent liberal or radical betrays any awareness of why this is so dangerous.

Geopolitics is not a subject that appeals to a generation rightly disillusioned by Vietnam. But the struggle for the world has not adjourned while the United States has attempted to recover its moral equilibrium. A Saudi Khomeini, backed by militant oilfield "komitehs" greatly concerned about infidel Israel's control of East Jerusalem, and covertly assisted in planning an embargo by the ever-helpful Soviet Union, could soon plunge the Western world into a shattering crisis.

On a less apocalyptic level, Helmut Schmidt, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and the recently defeated James Callaghan have watched with justified concern the increasing outflow of inflated and devalued petrodollars. According to an article in the Spring 1979 issue of *Foreign Affairs* by Daniel Yergin and Robert Stobaugh, by the late '80s that outflow may amount to \$110 billion a year in constant dollars (it is now \$50 billion). The future health of all Western economies depends on the

ability of the United States to achieve a rational energy policy. And West Europeans find it difficult to understand a policy that encourages the consumption of foreign oil by providing that Saudis and Venezuelans will be paid three times as much for a barrel of "old" oil as will Texans. This is taken to be an irrational and self-defeating policy and so it is.

THE BEGINNING of wisdom about the energy problem is to recognize that we are up against not a phony and manipulated "crisis" but a real and agonizing dilemma. Decontrol may well be intolerable, but so is its opposite.

What should be encouraged over the next few years (assuming that we can remain in favor with Allah) are energy policies that diminish our reliance on physically dangerous nuclear power and on politically, morally, and economically perilous Middle Eastern oil. What this, partly, may mean in practice is some financial encouragement to oil producers to pump and refine every barrel of domestic oil they can locate while the government spends whatever it takes to develop alternative sources of energy.

Instead of a futile struggle to control the price of an ever-shrinking percentage of our oil supply, congressional liberals would more profitably devote their efforts to passing legislation requiring that windfall profits be invested in increasing the supply of energy. Allowing the oil companies to charge the world price for their products would make non-OPEC oil instantly as valuable to them as OPEC oil and would thus do more to break the cartel than any other single event, because it would remove the oil companies' incentive to merely follow in OPEC's price wake. And where the oil companies are unwilling to assist non-OPEC Third World countries with development of their oil reserves out of fear for their profit margins or because of potential political turmoil, our government should back ongoing efforts by the United Nations and the World Bank to do so. The May 6 *Washington Post* contains an excellent story by J. P. Smith detailing the extent of untapped supplies in developing nations.

Any policy that increases the worldwide supply of oil is in our interest. Where the oil companies are helping to increase supply, they should be encouraged. Where they do not, they should be bypassed.

In a brilliant series in the April 23 and 30 issues of

To Our Contributors

- When sending manuscripts, please make sure that you do not send your only copy.
- And please also be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

—The Editors

the *New Yorker*, Barry Commoner points the way toward the solar future. But it will take time to get there and, in the interim, I see no plausible alternatives to detente with the oil companies, who will continue to perform an indispensable marketing function. This prescription does not

provide the emotional satisfactions of populist attitudinizing, and adherence to it would deprive liberals of the pleasure of being, for once, in phase with popular prejudice. But it may have some appeal to that saving remnant whose first allegiance is to the recognition of reality. □

Michael Harrington

Nuclear Power and Corporate Priorities

A challenge to nuclear power requires an assault upon the basic corporate priorities that undergird the entire economy. However, one suspects that many participants in the growing antinuclear movement, including some who consider themselves to be the most militant, have not faced up to the truly radical implications of shutting down this life-threatening industry.

To be sure, some have begun to confront the economic and social issues at stake. Barry Commoner's two-part series in the *New Yorker* showed how a shift to solar energy would require structural changes in the way energy decisions are made in this country. Charles Komanoff's analysis in the *New York Review of Books* demonstrated that nuclear energy is not only apocalyptically dangerous but also inefficient and costly. These and other crucial considerations, it seems to me, have not been examined by many people in the movement.

This is not simply an intellectual failure. If, for example, the antinuclear movement demands a shutdown of all nuclear facilities, but does not acknowledge the employment and economic effects of such a move, once again a middle-class and college-educated constituency could be pitted against blue-collar workers. Such a split was one of the reasons why the war in Vietnam dragged on with murderous consequences. It could impede the fulfillment of the goal that has become paramount

since the events at Three Mile Island: ending nuclear power in the United States.

THAT GOAL is clear enough now, but let me just summarize a few of the reasons for committing oneself to it.

- First, there is the issue of safety. On April 10, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) admitted that the sequence of events that led to the near-tragedy at Three Mile Island had not even been considered in the various safety analyses it made. How many other such surprises are in store? That problem is compounded by the corporate interest in glossing over problems and cutting costs, a factor that was plainly at work in the construction of the Three Mile Island plant and in the initial response to the accident. As the deaths from the Nevada tests in the '50s demonstrate, there can be a 20-year interval between a lethal event and the premature death it causes.
- Second, there is no waste disposal system now known that can deal with the deadly detritus of the nuclear industry. To continue on our present course would be to increase the number of "time bombs"—like the chemical wastes at the Love Canal in Buffalo, N.Y.—that could affect generations yet unborn.
- Third, as Komanoff has documented, the soaring costs of nuclear energy have been rising 17 percent faster than the general rate of inflation. Now that Three Mile Island will clearly force more

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rigorous standards on existing plants, the industry will further price itself out of business. Nuclear energy is big corporate energy: concentrated; capital intensive; bureaucratic and centralized. . . .

THERE MUST BE a transition to new, and renewable, forms of energy. That, as Commoner demonstrated in his *New Yorker* articles, is economically feasible if—but only if—there is government intervention overriding current energy industry priorities. Such intervention could lead to an energy system on a human scale—with farmers creating methane from biomass and photovoltaic cells providing an energy source available to single families and small communities. That, not so incidentally, might prove to be an enormous boon to the Third World, which is blessed with an abundance of one good: sunlight.

This would mean, according to an estimate in a recent Joint Economic Committee study, the loss of 1,137,000 jobs, 644,000 of them employing people operating and supplying facilities based on non-renewable fuels, 493,000 of them in power-plant manufacture and construction. Concern for that fact was clearly manifested at the annual legislative conference of the Building Trades Department of the AFL-CIO in April. The conference came out in favor of continuing nuclear power in the United States.

Antinuclear activists may ask if this is not just one more example of the narrow job consciousness of the building trades. After all, these people supported the war in Vietnam. Now they're supporting nuclear power. Won't they line up for whatever program will put the most construction workers on the site?

It is not nearly that simple, and to pretend that it is exacerbates a split that already exists between the antinuclear movement and this crucial section of labor.

Jobs are certainly central to the construction unions' concern in this area, but it is fantasy to presume that building trades leaders are planning to put all their members to work by constructing more nuclear plants. The largest single building trades union, the carpenters, would be only peripherally involved in nuclear plant construction, and the sheet metal workers have a trade-union interest in maximizing solar energy. Plumbers, laborers, electricians and other crafts have been employed building nuclear plants and, in part, they favor nuclear power to save and expand those jobs. But they and the carpenters and the

sheet metal workers are also genuinely concerned about the energy crisis and its impact on the living standards of all workers. In response to soaring costs of oil, they favor the development of *all* energy sources. Many building trades workers fear that antinuclear advocates and environmentalists adhere to "no growth" economics. When politicians and environmental leaders associated with the antinuclear cause talk about "the era of limits" and the need for Americans to "lower their expectations," building trades workers rightly fear a decline in the living standards of workers and the poor. The challenge facing the antinuclear movement in this respect is to convince building trades workers and other citizens that a non-nuclear future can provide a better quality of life.

The articles already mentioned by Commoner and by Komanoff provide guidance in that respect. So do hearings conducted by Senator Kennedy last year, which showed that investment in solar and renewable energy resources would create more jobs than following the present course.

One of the witnesses at those hearings was William Winpisinger, president of the Machinists and a vice chair of DSOC. Winpisinger made the essential point that the transition to new and benign forms of energy could, and must, be part of a full-employment program that would have a net effect of reducing joblessness in the United States.

The April 1979 Joint Economic Committee study clearly supports Winpisinger's basic point. There would be a loss of 1,137,000 jobs and a potential increase (from conservation and solar energy investments) of 7,870,000 jobs. A very large number of these slots, it should be noted, would put building trades people to work. The matching up would not come from the workings of the invisible hand of Adam Smith. It would require careful planning and a serious full-employment policy, i.e., the very measures that the American labor movement, in all of its wings, has been advocating for some time. . . .

SO IT IS at least *possible* that the current crisis—and the demand to end capital-intensive nuclear power generation—could be made a part of a national full-employment plan. Whether that will happen is not, however, an academic question. It will be settled by political power and requires that the antinuclear movement be willing to take on giant corporations. In October 1978, *Business Week* printed a revealing article entitled "General Electric Hedges Its Bets," which notes that, while

the energy corporations do not see solar power as an immediate threat, they do fear a solar future, because it might *disperse* the generation of energy by putting collectors on every roof top. So, the article concludes, General Electric and its friends are going into solar energy on a hedge basis, i.e. (and this, of course, is my own comment, not *Business Week's*), in order to be sure that any solar technology of the future will be centralized and bureaucratized under their dominion. As Roland W. Schmitt, a GE vice president, put it, "... the real key is that the government is willing to spend a lot." Anyone who thinks that industry will stand by and allow those public investments to be used for a technology scaled to the common good of America and the Third World is naive.

Therefore, the antinuclear movement must adopt a more complex program than the one it now articulates. The basic proposition is not simply: end nuclear energy for all of the obvious reasons. It must be: end nuclear energy through a full-employment program that will produce an alternate technology of human scale. Such a formulation points in the direction of two basic considerations. It allows the antinuclear movement to reach out to the unions, much as groups like Environmentalists for Full Employment have begun to do. And it focuses on the fact that the movement will be radical or else it will fail—that is, that a resolution of the current nuclear crisis requires a defeat of the corporate power that has dominated American energy policy from the beginning. □

David W. Orr

Perspectives on Energy

Energy policy has customarily been regarded as a highly technical subject requiring expertise in nuclear physics and other recondite disciplines. Accordingly, energy policy was largely restricted to the technical aspects of conversion, transmission, and the arcana of pricing, and was dominated by a narrow group of experts. Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973-74, however, this exclusiveness has been increasingly challenged. Opposition to expert-ordained nuclear energy and the burgeoning grass-roots interest in solar energy are only the most visible parts of the challenge. Beneath it is a growing body of opinion crystallized in Amory Lovins's "soft energy path," suggesting that the issues of energy policy are not primarily technical but political, social, and ethical. This view represents not so much a repudiation of expertise as a disagreement over the nature of the issues.

In this respect, the debate may foreshadow other issues on the horizon that concern the allocation of scarce resources, adaptation to or extension of environmental limits, and the management of

technology. These issues indeed will confront us with an extraordinary array of risks and challenges, for our political institutions were designed to deal with simpler problems. Despite the fact that technological choices may entail large political consequences they seldom, if ever, appear as such on the political agenda. Technology is commonly regarded as a means, and therefore neutral regarding ends. But as Jacques Ellul and others have argued, technology can also affect or preempt ends.

The present debate over energy policy is not merely about which technologies we shall develop, but also about what kind of society we shall become.

I will here first briefly describe the energy "crisis" or, more accurately, the energy transition. Second, I will examine the three dominant perspectives on energy policy and compare the political assumptions of each. Finally, I will suggest that the energy crisis poses at least as much of a challenge to our political inventiveness as to our technical genius.

The Energy Transition

THE PRESENT ENERGY "CRISIS" involves the early stages of a transition from a declining energy base to another, more abundant one. Previous transitions from wood to coal and from coal to oil have taken earlier and simpler societies no less than half a century.¹ The causes of the transitions are complex and include the depletion of one resource base and/or the development of the technological means to exploit another. Such a transition can involve great turmoil and lead to social and political disintegration. The greater the dependence on nonrenewable energy sources (e.g., fossil fuels) and the greater the demand for energy, the more difficult the transition is likely to be. The important variables in the transition include the amount of available lead time to create and disseminate alternative energy-conversion technologies; the degree of societal adaptability; and the quality of political leadership.

Briefly stated, the present energy crisis in the United States is attributable to the fact that the production of oil and natural gas has been declining since 1970 while consumption continues to rise. New discoveries and North Slope Alaskan oil (amounting to less than two years of present consumption) can delay but will not appreciably alter the trend. The use of coal is problematic because of its effects on human health, ecology, climate, and the high capital costs of converting it to more acceptable forms. Nuclear power, once heralded as the means to produce electricity "too cheap to meter," is faced with rising capital and fuel costs, unanswered (and possibly unanswerable) questions about safety, waste storage, vulnerability to terrorism, and its effects on the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Given the limits to each of the four major energy sources of oil, natural gas, coal, and uranium, it is clear that the energy base of the mid-21st century will be markedly different from that of the present. As nonrenewable fuels become more scarce and expensive they must be replaced by renewable and inexhaustible energy sources requiring the development of new technologies including decentralized solar energy, breeder reactors, fusion, and solar power beamed to earth from space satellites. The rate at which nonrenewable fossil fuels decline, hence the time available for the transition, will vary, with recoverable supplies of oil and natural gas declining much more rapidly than those of coal. Nevertheless, the overall trend is clear, even if the timing is not. Because of the high capital costs of

the renewable energy options, they are to a large extent mutually exclusive. To choose one is to foreclose the others. Each of these options also entails different environmental and societal risks including economic dislocation, nuclear proliferation, reactor accidents, and global climate change.

Perspectives

1. SUPPLY. At the risk of some distortion we can distinguish three dominant perspectives on these questions in the current debate over U.S. energy policy. The first of these, the supply argument, holds that we must produce our way out of the crisis, because "the country that runs on energy can't afford to run short." The energy crisis is thus defined not as a problem of scarcity, but as one of maintaining a growing supply of cheap energy in the belief that there are vast stores of oil still to be discovered at the right price. Energy demand is further presumed to be highly inelastic and tightly linked to economic growth and thus to social progress. The alternative to continually increasing energy supply is in Hans Bethe's words "unemployment and recession, if not worse."² Conservation would only reduce the standard of living and damage the nation's economy. In addition, a growing energy supply is regarded as necessary to alleviate poverty and clean up the environment. In this view government cannot intervene on the demand side of the energy equation without abridging fundamental rights and undermining the free enterprise system. It is appropriate, nonetheless, for the government to intervene on the supply side with direct and indirect subsidies in the form of grants, depletion allowances, tax breaks, and research funding.

For the advocates of the supply position, the principal actors in energy policy are in order of importance: corporations, government officials, and university experts. This largely corresponds to the elite that has controlled energy policy in the recent past, which has been described by one analyst as a

small, stable and closed circle of . . . petroleum, or coal, or oil, or nuclear men. And those within the government tend to share basic orientations with colleagues in industry and the universities. All have a strong supply of orientation, a common faith in technology, and an "engineering mentality."³

The exclusion of the public from policy making is an extension of the belief that citizens cannot understand complex issues. When the public does

get involved it will "usually result in a misallocation of resources" because the public "simply does not have the information to relate perception to reality."⁴

The goal for the advocates of this perspective is to achieve an inexhaustible supply of cheap energy based initially on increasing current production of fossil fuels and eventually the breeder reactor and nuclear fusion. If successful, we could "make a direct attack on entropy . . . or even reach for the alchemist's dream of elemental transmutation."⁵ If we fail in the quest for an inexhaustible energy supply, the future they depict differs in no appreciable way from that commonly attributed to the "neo-Malthusians." The goal, therefore, is so vital that it requires us to court risks of technological catastrophes, the effects of which would be comparable to what Bethe describes as "minor wars."

This presents us with a curious paradox. Technologically advanced societies are portrayed as so inflexible that any leveling or reduction in energy consumption would cause disaster. Yet, these same societies are portrayed as flexible enough to withstand the acknowledged certainty of periodic catastrophes including large oil spills, nuclear melt downs, liquid natural gas explosions, and global climate change.⁶

2. CONSERVATION. A second view of the energy crisis was described in the "technical-fix" scenario of the Ford Foundation's Energy Policy Project and later in the Carter administration's National Energy Plan (NEP). The key proposition is that the United States wastes 30 to 50 percent of its total energy budget. Sweden, by contrast, uses slightly more than half as much energy per capita as the United States, and Switzerland only a third as much.⁷ Conservation, in the words of the NEP, is "the cleanest and cheapest source of new energy" and is essential if we are to avoid both the hazards of dependence on foreign sources and energy wars.

The principal assumption of those emphasizing conservation is that the historic tie between energy consumption and economic growth can be broken and that this need not exact a penalty in reduced economic growth. Marc Ross and Robert Williams, for instance, argue that we can reach zero energy growth by 1985, while maintaining comfortable rates of economic growth thereafter.⁸ Another recent study concluded that "it will be technically feasible in 2010 to use roughly a total amount of energy as low as that used today and still provide a higher level of amenities, even with a

total population increasing 35%."⁹ The NEP was not as optimistic but nevertheless aimed to maintain high rates of economic growth while reducing the annual increase in energy demand to less than 2 percent. Despite varying estimates about the price elasticity of energy demand, they all assume that an increase in the price of energy combined with the removal of institutional barriers will reduce energy demand and lead to the emergence of an energy-efficient and more labor-intensive economy.

In contrast to the emphasis on corporate initiatives in the first approach, the catalyst for energy efficiency is the federal government. In the words of the NEP "the energy problem can be effectively addressed only by a government that accepts responsibility for dealing with it comprehensively." Government intervention is necessary to insure that energy is priced at its replacement level; to provide consumer incentives for conservation (e.g., tax credits, extension programs, low-interest loans); and to conduct research on energy technologies not otherwise developed in the private sector.

The goal of the conservation approach is an energy-efficient society in the near term, in order to gain time to build a more secure energy base for the long term. To this end it is essential to eliminate waste and utilize technical innovations and price incentives to maximize the productivity of energy. Adopting the conservation ethic, however, does not entail changes in life-styles beyond those described as "cosmetic." President Carter, for example, has stated that the NEP is an "insurance policy" requiring only "small premiums." Similarly, conservation does not entail change in the values of economic growth or mass consumption. Nor do the technological goals of the conservation approach, evidenced by the Department of Energy's research and development expenditures, differ from those of the first perspective. In the 1978-2000 period, they propose a combination of conservation and greater reliance on nuclear power and coal. Beyond 2000, they propose more exotic technologies including coal gasification, the breeder reactor, and nuclear fusion.

In addition to the risks of economic dislocation caused by interruption of energy supplies, proponents of conservation warn of the impending exhaustion of oil reserves, huge balance-of-payments problems, dependence on unreliable foreign suppliers, and of the related possibility of energy wars. These risks, however, are avoidable through conservation and technical fixes, and need

not entail long-term economic or social constraints.

3. **ENERGETICS.** Drawing from a diverse array of thinkers, we can outline a third perspective, which begins by describing a causal relation between the energy basis of a society and its social, political, and economic structures. The present energy crisis, therefore, is more than a problem of inadequate supply or inefficiency; it is fundamentally a social and cultural crisis. The "problem" of energy is the challenge of creating an energy supply system that is compatible with democratic values while conforming to the laws of thermodynamics.

The basic assumption of this third perspective, that society is subject to the same energy laws as are natural systems, dates at least to the work of the British chemist turned economist, Frederick Soddy. Writing in 1922, Soddy argued that energy flows were causally linked to social and economic development.¹⁰ Fred Cottrell later expanded this theme, arguing that "the energy available to man limits what he *can* do and influences what he *will* do."¹¹ Cottrell developed the idea that the control of surplus energy (net energy) is the key to an understanding of social and cultural evolution. The technological innovations that created high-energy civilization have been those that produced surplus energy, which could then be used to create more energy converters. But the rise of an energy-intensive society also creates a variety of costs including the concentration of political power, the consequent decline of democracy, and a greater possibility of international conflict. Similar themes appear in the work of anthropologist Leslie White, who argued in an essay in 1949 that cultural evolution depended upon energy use per capita and the efficiency with which a society harnessed it. Although expanding energy use motivated cultural development, it also, according to White, leads inevitably to the concentration of political power and international conflict.¹²

Energy determinism is even more pronounced in the work of Howard Odum, who maintains that the source of energy and its rate of flow determine social values and the superstructure of economic and political institutions. Societies, like natural systems, can be mapped as energy flows, and they are subject to the same constraints described in the laws of thermodynamics. Social systems accordingly ought to be patterned after natural systems in order to stress decentralization, diversity, and redundancy. Natural systems, and by implication social systems, develop until their "maintenance

and organization costs equal their energy budgets."¹³ When organizational maintenance costs rise beyond this point, the system declines. Thus, in nature and human affairs, systems that are more energy efficient will be more stable and will survive longer.

A second and related assumption is that the process of energy conversion is limited by entropy as defined by the second law of thermodynamics. To speed the pace of economic development is to hasten the creation of high entropy or disorder. The appropriate question then is not whether to strive for a steady-state, but how best to prolong a declining one.

Proponents of the third approach believe that government must be the catalyst for an appropriate energy policy. But in contrast to the first and second perspectives, they emphasize the importance of wide public involvement in policy making and policy implementation. In Amory Lovins's words, "some action by central and local government is . . . necessary to get the ball rolling, but then it's mostly downhill."¹⁴ He and others assume that once energy is priced at its replacement cost and institutional barriers are removed, the public will adopt solar technologies for both economic and political reasons. The result would be the democratization of energy policy and the replacement of tens, or at most hundreds, of major policy decisions with millions of private choices. National energy politics would give way to community politics and local self-sufficiency. After facilitating the process, there would be little for government to do in the energy sector but (dare one say it) to wither away.

Despite disagreements, the goal of advocates of the energetics approach is the creation of a solar-based, decentralized, egalitarian, and participatory society. Their patron saints include Jefferson, Kropotkin, and E. F. Schumacher. Energy policy is regarded as a lever to move society toward a more environmentally sustainable, if materially less extravagant, basis while enhancing equity and involvement. The risks they wish to avoid include large-scale technological accidents, irreversible ecological damage resource exhaustion, and the implicit threat to democracy posed by centralized institutions.

Perspectives and Prescriptions

EACH OF THE THREE POSITIONS offers a different diagnosis of the crisis and different prescriptions for its resolution. But advocates of each agree that

the situation is unprecedented for at least five reasons: (1) the great dependence of the U.S. on an uninterrupted flow of cheap energy; (2) the foreseeable exhaustion of easily exploitable supplies of oil and natural gas; (3) the long lead time necessary to create an alternative energy supply system; (4) the likely exclusivity and irreversibility of the choices; and (5) the large-scale risks to the environment, the economy, and future generations entailed in the decision.

The first two perspectives are similar to the extent that they would move us in the direction of a fossil fuel/light water energy system and ultimately to a breeder/fusion economy. They differ on the roles of private enterprise and the federal government, and to a lesser extent on the relative stress each would place on efficiency. The third perspective, however, would take us toward a decentralized, participatory, solar-based society. The disagreement between the first two and the third perspective is partly over questions of fact such as the relation between energy use and economic growth, estimates of cost, forecasts of recoverable oil and natural gas reserves, climate thresholds for heat and carbon dioxide, and the feasibility and side effects of new technologies. Beneath these, however, are more important disagreements about goals and values. How much participation is necessary for democracy to function? What technological risks are worth what benefits? What place should we accord natural objects that stand in our way and have no instrumental value? What is the nature and extent of obligations, if any, that we owe to future generations?

Assuming that we ask the right questions, scientific research can eventually resolve most factual disputes. Disagreements over values and goals pose more intractable problems. Traditionally, social goals have been determined indirectly by elections and markets. But questions about the costs and benefits of large-scale technologies and social goals do not appear directly in either. Within the energy sector, for example, the selection of goals and technologies has been dominated by a small corporate and governmental elite described by Robert Engler as the "private government of energy." Energy policy, accordingly, has been decided on the basis of technical feasibility, efficiency, and profit, and not on the basis of its social, political, and environmental effects. If this was tolerable in the past, it is markedly less so in an era of high technology. As the scale, complexity, and centralization of the energy sector has grown, so also has the energy dependence of industrial society. It may be far-fetched to warn, as some

have, of an "energy dictatorship," but, with increasing reliance on expertise and large organizations, technical considerations tend to preempt political processes. Value questions are easily disguised beneath the rhetoric of necessity and cost efficiency. The prospect of larger energy crises in the future bring strong temptations, under the guise of realism, to enter into "Faustian bargains" whereby we trade our hard-won political birthright to anyone who can supply us with a mess of wattage.

Some have argued that, all things considered, Faustian bargains are the lesser of several evils. There certainly is room for reasoned disagreement. More to the point, however, the energy transition confronts us with very different macro images of the future, while we are prepared to make only micro choices, in a fragmented, incremental way. The danger of politics as usual lies in the neglect of the larger questions.

The transition to a new energy supply system raises old questions presumably settled a long time ago. How much energy do we need? For what purposes? What is the appropriate mix of social and political centralization and decentralization? What balance should we seek between expertise and democratic participation? By what criteria do we decide technological issues involving many unknowns, high consequence risks, "soft" variables, and large social effects?

We have entered a qualitatively new era in which technology has given us the power to radically alter the conditions of life and our tenure as a species. The present energy transition is only one of a growing number of issues concerning the purposes and governance of technology. Yet, as we debate how to store radioactive wastes for geologic ages, or how to harness the fusion process of the sun, one finds no plan and little philosophy, only momentum. It is no longer satisfactory to resign ourselves to any and all technological developments in the Darwinian faith that, by definition, they epitomize progressive evolution. The decision about whether to develop breeder reactors, fusion power, space satellites, or decentralized, renewable energy systems ought to be made in accord with political and social purposes, not the reverse. To this end it is time, as Robert Dahl has suggested, for a thorough reappraisal of our system of government.¹⁵ □

Notes

¹⁵Earl Cook, *Man, Energy, Society* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1976), pp. 164-87.

²Hans Bethe, "The Necessity of Fission Power," *Scientific American*, January 1976, p. 31.

³*The Energy Syndrome*, Leon Lindberg, ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1977), p. 334.

⁴Chauncey Starr, Richard Rudman, Chris Whipple, "Philosophical Basis For Risk Analysis," *Annual Review of Energy*, vol. 1, Jack M. Hollander, ed. (Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, Inc., 1976), p. 635.

⁵Sterling Brubaker, *In Command of Tomorrow* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 5.

⁶Herman Kahn, William Brown, Leon Martel, *The Next 200 Years* (New York: William Morrow, 1976).

⁷Lee Schipper and Allan J. Lichtenberg, "Efficient Energy Use and Well-Being: The Swedish Example," *Science*, December 3, 1976, pp. 1001-13.

⁸M. H. Ross and R. H. Williams, *Energy and Economic Growth* (U.S. Congress: Joint Economic Committee, August 31, 1977).

⁹Demand and Conservation Panel for the Committee on Nuclear and Alternative Energy Systems, "U.S. Energy Demand: Some Low Energy Futures," *Science*, April 14, 1978, p. 151.

¹⁰Frederick Soddy, *Cartesian Economics* (London: Hendersons, 1922).

¹¹Fred Cottrell, *Energy and Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 2.

¹²Leslie A. White, "Energy and the Evolution of Culture," in White, *The Science of Culture* (New York: Grove Press, 1949), p. 388.

¹³Howard T. Odum, *Environment, Power, and Society* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1971), p. 231.

¹⁴Amory B. Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1977), p. 152.

¹⁵Robert A. Dahl, "On Removing Certain Impediments to Democracy in The United States," *Dissent*, Summer 1978. □

Irving Howe

Nuclear Power: HOW Do We Know?

For some time now, the *Newsweek* columnist George Will has been praised as a civilized conservative. He tries to reason, he doesn't often rant, he looks good by comparison to William Buckley (a modest enough test). But he remains a conservative ideologue, and what that entails can be seen in a column he wrote early in April attacking the movie *The China Syndrome*. The tenor of his attack is suggested by its subtitle: "There is more cancer risk in sitting next to a smoker than next to a nuclear power plant." With contempt dripping for the no-nukers, the simplifiers who are "anti-technology," Will came out happily, aggressively for the virtues of nuclear power.

This was all very well, except for a slight mishap—a few days later came Three Mile Island.

Will's self-advertised rationality and complexity of mind could not keep him from writing like any other right-wing ideologue prepared to entrust the future of the human race to private energy

corporations and their friends in government who are supposed to regulate them. His rationality and complexity of mind did not keep him from minimizing grave dangers to future generations, nor from sneering at those who had publicly raised an outcry about those dangers.

It turns out that the "simplistic" protesters, the "anti-technology" freaks and "simple-lifers," were at least serving a valuable function through their protests. Whether their proposals are right or wrong, their outcries mattered. They were alerting us to genuine dangers that everyone in a position of authority was trying to minimize. So we should be grateful to them—and tell the George Wills of this world to open up their minds a little.

Still, that doesn't mean the protesters are necessarily right in their demands—especially those who insist that nuclear energy be scrapped entirely. That there is a real danger, that there is every reason to be cautious, that there should at least be a moratorium on nuclear development and

a closing of every plant with a discernable significant flaw: this makes sense as an immediate course.

BUT BEYOND THAT, we find ourselves in serious difficulty. It is the difficulty of laymen who have to depend, not entirely but largely, on expert opinion. How, in a democracy, are such matters to be decided? How do we know whether nuclear power should be expanded, contracted, or cut off entirely? The more absolutist of the protesters assert that they know. But *how* do they know? Pressed, they present scientific authorities. Fine; but, alas, the other side has its authorities too. The majesty of science, indeed!

The one indisputable strength of the protesters is the argument that the danger is real enough to warrant extreme measures of caution right now: indeed, that the burden of proof for continuing nuclear power must rest with its defenders. But beyond that?

There are some things that we can be reasonably sure about. People on the democratic left ought to support the various schemes for nuclear moratoriums, some of them introduced recently in

Congress. As an educational proposal—educational, since there is no chance of its being immediately adopted—Mike Harrington's idea that there should be created a publicly owned energy corporation to compete with the private companies is a good one. And in general, there is every reason to keep pressing the case for public control and decision in this area, since it affects the life of the entire people and since the profit-grabbing of the oil corporations should not be allowed to shape decisions.

But on some crucial matters, I confess to uncertainty. The uncertainty extends beyond the decisions themselves, and to the still more important question of how to make the decisions. I think it's necessary to suggest that a responsible body of scientists and non-scientists be created to recommend policy on nuclear power. Suppose, however, as seems likely, the scientists differ sharply: what then? All one can say is, sensible people will tilt heavily toward caution. But for those of us who believe in democracy, not just as a formal system of procedures but as an active engagement of the people, this is a painfully difficult problem. Perhaps a wiser head has an answer? □

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS, French leftist and formerly the leader of the Barbarism or Socialism movement, was associated with the French magazine *Arguments*.

PETER CONNOLLY, a lawyer, works as a Senate aide. His articles have appeared in *Dissent* and other journals.

ROBERT A. DAHL, Sterling professor of political science at Yale University, is the author of, among other books, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* and of *After the Revolution: Authority in a Good Society*. He is completing a book on democratic pluralism and another, on democracy and its critics.

THOMAS B. EDSALL is a reporter in the Washington bureau of the *Baltimore Sun*.

LEONARD FEIN, Klutznick professor of contemporary Jewish studies at Brandeis University, is the author of *Politics in Israel* (1968) and editor of *Moment*.

PHILIP GREEN, who teaches government at Smith College, is at work on a study of equality, to be published by Pantheon. His three-part essay on "Genetics, IQ, and

Equality" appeared in our 1976 spring, summer, and fall issues.

DICK HOWARD, former editor of *Telos*, teaches philosophy at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. His most recent book is *The Marxian Legacy* (1979) and he now is at work on a manuscript entitled "From Marx to Kant."

SIMON LEYS is the pen name—for his writings on contemporary Chinese society—of a distinguished scholar who teaches at an Australian university and specializes in Chinese painting and literature. Readers will remember his "Broken Images," in the fall 1976 *Dissent*—the first appearance of Leys' work in America.

NICOLAUS MILLS teaches literature at Sarah Lawrence College. His latest book, *Busing U.S.A.*, has just been published by Teachers' College Press. He is now finishing a book on crowds in literature.

DAVID W. ORR has published articles on energy/environmental policy in a number of journals and anthologies, and has co-edited and contributed to *The Global Predicament: Ecological Perspectives on World Order* (University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

ELAINE SPITZ teaches political science at Hunter College, CUNY. She has just completed a book on majority rule. □

Jin Sheng

From the Walls of Peking

We print below a section of The Fifth Modernization, a dazibao or wall journal, which appeared in Peking several months ago. The English version is taken from a French translation from the Chinese, printed in Esprit, the independent left magazine that appears in Paris.

The author, who uses the pseudonym of Jin Sheng, has also written a document on the political prison of Quincheng where, in the time of Mao, purged political prisoners were kept. Sheng himself was arrested on March 29, 1979, in the suppression of the "excesses" of democracy.

The remaining introductory remarks are by CLAUDE WIDOR, taken from Esprit:

Since November 1978, a real movement of political debate has taken place around the so-called Democratic Wall. These *dazibao*, or wall journals, have given rise to like-minded newspapers and the papers, in turn, have expressed the views of small groups whose influence is on the increase.

The text here presented is amazing for its daring. *The Fifth Modernization* turns the spotlight on the development of Chinese communism and goes on to a "defense and illustration" of Western democracy. This radical position is scarcely held, we may imagine, by the majority of the dissident activists. However, it is widespread enough so that the author of *The Fifth Modernization*—who uses the pseudonym of Jin Sheng—far from being an isolated case, is recognized as one of the chief directors of the democratic movement.

Three distinct tendencies may be clearly perceived in the movement. The more moderate go back to Cho(u) EnLai (En-lai), who initiated the program of the Four Modernizations, and his heir Deng Xiaoping (Hsiao P'ing), in whom they believe they see the heralds of a "communism with a human face." The mouthpieces of this faction, *Pekin(g) Spring* (an allusion to the Prague Spring) and *Science, Democracy, Legality*, are inspired by the spirit of the "official heroes" of April 5, victims of the 1976 repression, subsequently promoted—after the fall of the "Four"—to the Central Committee of the Young Communist League. Constituting the militant part of the movement for awhile, they often paid for their courage with long years of imprisonment. . . .

Flanking this moderate tendency, seven groups and newspapers joined forces to present a united front after the repression that took place at the end of January 1979: the Society of Light, the *Tribune of April 5*, *Today*, *Reference Bulletin of the Masses*, the League of the Rights of Man, the *Tribune of the People*, and *Inquiries*. These groups demand respect for democratic rights guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution and specifically the rights of free speech, organization, and the right to strike. They are far less concerned with the Preamble to this Constitution, which makes Marxism-Leninism the official ideology and the Communist party "the directorial nexus of the Chinese people." But, whether because of prudence or conviction, a majority of the members of these groups still professes attachment to Marxism if not to the thought of Mao.

Only the militants grouped around the *Tribune of the People* (itself the product of a radical split within the *Tribune of April 5*), *Inquiries*, and to a lesser extent members of the League of the Rights of Man express a strong anti-Marxism and a no less lively hostility to the rule of the single party. . . .

They do not hesitate to convoke meetings for public discussion and take the floor in the name

of their newspaper or organization. Is it insane daring or a bet on the eventual development of the regime? The dissidents themselves would be hard put to it to answer this question. . . .

The first part of *The Fifth Modernization* was put up on December 5, 1978 at the Tsidan (Xidan) crossroads in the center of Peking, and the second part toward the end of December. It so successfully aroused interest that it gave rise to a small multilithed paper, *Inquiries*, whose first issue was dated January 7, 1979 and reproduced the first two *dazibao*. There was a second issue of *Inquiries*, put out on January 27, which featured a continuation of *The Fifth Modernization*. Three sections appeared in all. In the first part, the author proposed in a somewhat disorderly fashion a number of themes that he takes up methodically in the second and third parts. This opening gambit sounded many provocative notes: Mao is identified with Stalin and Hitler; "feudal socialism" as practiced by the Chinese Communists is likened to National Socialism; Deng Xiaoping is taken to task, and so on.

What follows is an abridged translation of the second part.

— C. W. □

The Fifth Modernization

Since the first part of *The Fifth Modernization* was pasted up on the Democratic Wall, we have seen some harsh comments appear on the subject. One of these is signed with the pseudonym "Jiao Da." This pseudonym immediately conjures up the image of the "slave,"¹ and, like the utterances of all slaves, the criticism this one levels is pitiable. In China today, the word "amateur" is fashionable: for the moment, then, let us call our detractor an "amateur slave."

And, in fact, one can tell a professional from an amateur slave. Here is an example: those who brandished cudgels in Tienanmen Square two years ago and who struck people with them in the name of the "government of the people" may be called professional slaves. Whether they are "consenting adults" or not, their job in life is to carry out the orders of their superiors, especially if there is a profit to be got from it. Another example: "Jiao Da" whose words we find on the Wall deserves the epithet of "amateur slave" if one concedes that he probably received no instructions from superiors—but what an idea to choose as his

pseudonym the name of the dyed-in-the-wool slave in *The Dream of the Red Pavillion*!

One may understand those who are slaves because of self-interest, but that in our country—ruled by overlords identical with those we find in *The Dream of the Red Pavillion*—there are persons who are ready to play the role of "amateur slaves" proves one thing: it is not the influence of a few individuals that gives tyranny or dictatorship its rocklike solidity but the support it can count on from a powerful feudal society.

This is not a question to be taken lightly. It is *the* question all patriots must ask themselves who do not wish to see China dragging in the wake of other nations, eventually to disappear from the surface of the earth, all who do not wish to see our people suffer endless distress.

Can the "Four Modernizations" [i.e., modernization of industry, agriculture, science, and the army] be achieved in a society ruled by overlords plus professional and amateur slaves? Impossible! The situation in our country offers a grim picture: for some time now, we have been forbidden even to mention the Four Modernizations. That they may be mentioned today is considered largesse, a concession granted at the insistence

¹Jiao Da is the name of the character in *The Dream of the Red Pavillion*, the well-known 18th-century novel. He is the old family retainer, viz. slave, of the Jia family.

of the higher-ups. Aren't you overcome with gratitude? If emotion does not bring tears to your eyes, watch out: someone may well be taking down the number of your bike license!²

Our young people are not the "sick men of Asia." They have the courage to paste up the *dazibao*, the courage to read them, the courage to formulate all sorts of opinions on taboo subjects. Why? Although they have not yet targeted as false what was presented to them as "Truth," they have nonetheless lost faith for some time now in the "Truth" they have been exposed to over the past several decades. Our youth needs new routes to open up if it is to have a new life. There are those who believe that one may pull the wool over the eyes of the naive by using old tricks. They are wrong: the young are not naive. Even if they are stripped of all the means essential for reflection, their hopes will not be snuffed out. They have pierced the "bamboo curtain" and glimpsed the light. Like a whiplash, this has goaded them to search out the weak points in the established "Truth" and to seek a route that leads to a new life—democracy. Of course, the authorities can stop the progress opened by the Democratic Wall. But can they fail to tremble before us, the questioners [the inquirers]?³

I'll say it out loud: I offer my ideas to all questioners, all inquirers. I am not talking to the overlords or to their slaves of whatever kind.

²Here the author refers to an incident that took place in front of the Democratic Wall in December 1978. Two policemen in civilian dress were caught noting down the bicycle license numbers of those who had parked in front of the Wall. A young activist protested this "violation of the Constitution," since the posting and reading of the Wall newspapers are specifically authorized, and was hauled off to the guardhouse.

³An allusion to the journal *Inquiries*, in which this text was published.

⁴Mao published a program called *Of Popular Democratic Dictatorship* just before the Liberation.

⁵A quotation from Lin Piao's introduction to Mao's *Little Red Book*.

Totalitarianism and Democracy

Dictators throughout history have availed themselves of all sorts of jargons and methods, but they are at one in preaching a single theme to their people: since men live in society, the interests of that society take precedence over all other interests. Since the interests of society are common to all, a central administration or government is essential. And since government by a minority or even by a single individual offers a maximum of centralization, dictatorship is the ideal form of government. That is why "popular democratic dictatorship"⁴ led to the tyranny of "the Great Navigator"! And that is also why the tyrant is at once North Star and Navigator who will save humanity and "whom China has finally produced after hundreds, nay, thousands of years."⁵

Man is eminently sociable since he nearly always lives in a given society, but:

(A) Society is made up of different individuals and each individual, while remaining in touch with other people, maintains an independent existence in response to his/her inherent characteristics.

(B) The "social nature" of man is formed by the convergence of the points of view and interests held in common by these numerous different individuals. The differences among the units at the base of the social structure—i.e., the individuals—are at the root of the differences of the societies themselves. That is why the social character of the individual derives from his individuality; the very existence of human society is conditioned by the existence of these individuals who form that society.

(C) Thus, we must recognize the fact that individuality and sociability are two great components of human nature, but it is individuality that comes first.

The difference between democracy and totalitarianism cannot be reduced to the

difference between individuality and sociability: instead, they are two different ways of being in different societies. The way of being in a totalitarian society is the oppression of the individuality of its subjects, that is why totalitarianism is essentially a form of slavery. Democracy, instead, is built on the fusion of individualities; that is why it is essentially a form of cooperation. No one can cite a totalitarian state that does not oppress the individual and, as a consequence, reduce its people to slavery. And no one can cite a democratic state that is not the fusion of the majority of its citizens and does not base its existence on the needs of individuals. The characteristic of totalitarianism is suppression of individuality and that of democracy is the protection and the fusion of individualities. Would you rather live slave or free? For the great majority of Chinese, this question is superfluous. Of course, "amateur slaves" are the exception!

Socialism and Democracy

There are now two definitions of the word "socialism": the first defines socialism as the most rational form of society, a step toward communism, the ideal form of society. Those most convinced of this are those most affected by the poison of propaganda. Their infection must be entirely attributed to Marx and his heirs. According to the second definition, socialism is the corrupt expression of totalitarianism because all the extant socialisms are totalitarian. I believe neither of these definitions is entirely correct.

The first group disregards the following point: all totalitarianisms use the ideal of a marvelous future to justify the tyranny they practice today. They use this "compensation" to lull man's yearning for a better life. It's a little as if one offered a drawing of a hard roll to someone who is hungry: one satisfies the spirit of people's wishes in order to block, by the *facts* of power, their search for a better life. To adhere to this idealism means, in fact, to support totalitarianism.

There were socialists before Marx but, at that time, they were associated with the democratic movement. To unite the socialist movement to people's aspirations for a better life, to incorporate idealism with socialism, that was the channel borrowed by totalitarianism. This worthy "scientific" effort must be attributed to Marx. This form of socialism—totalitarianism—perfectly corresponded to the needs of people at that time. Their ideology and their [social] morality has not yet been freed from the bonds of feudal society, hence could not adapt to the interplay of a developed capitalist society. But they had in common with the rest of humanity the desire for a better life. In denouncing the shortcomings of democracy as it exists, this socialism gave an explanation and a promise: since democracy can only profit a minority, dictatorship is needed; as present-day democracy cannot meet your aspirations to a better life, dictatorship must be called in to the aid of the majority; since you haven't the habit of taking your fate into your own hands, you must entrust it to the dictatorship; since, despite your efforts, present-day democracy can only meet your aspirations halfway, you must concentrate all your energies on the "struggle for a better future."

This "better future," which we all know so well by now, is none other than dictatorship and tyranny. How does it happen that every present-day "socialist" country is the direct descendent of the more retrograde feudal societies? This question truly deserves pondering. Until now, all that this type of socialism proposes is a sort of idealistic incarnation of the democratic revolution. Such socialisms all depend on the insertion of feudal cultural traditions to resist the young growth of democratic culture; they all try, through a philosophy generated by feudal society, to make us believe that a minority can guide and ensure the happiness of the majority; that is why they turn ineluctibly toward totalitarianism. The result—fascism and dictatorship—cannot be due to chance since it is ubiquitous. There is not a single exception, for these socialist societies are the

direct issue of the cream of feudal philosophy: classic German philosophy. Following the track of this idealist socialism amounts, then, to supporting totalitarianism—[i.e.] fascism and dictatorship.

Those who subscribe to the second definition consider only the present state of the socialist countries as a basis for judgment of socialism in general, without analyzing the intrinsic meaning and the total range of development processes of socialism—this view is too narrow. Originally, the aim of socialism was to achieve—by the socialization of production and of life itself—the administration and use by the people of those means necessary for the survival of the human race, namely the means of production. To put it differently, every individual must have the opportunity for equal enjoyment, as well as the duty and ability to make equal use of these means of production. Socialism is, then, first

of all the capacity to live “equally” as equals. This ability may be developed only through living in a form of free organization of society: democratic government; besides, socialism naturally tends toward democracy. Each and every government of fascist dictatorship that has risen to power by the socialist method has had perforce pitilessly to purge the democratic tendencies that have insinuated themselves into the socialist mind. Moreover, once the dictators have achieved power, they suffer from recurrent attacks by these democratic trends. This is one proof of the inclination of the socialist movement toward democracy. But so long as these tendencies will not have won out over the people’s superstitions concerning their dictators, so long as they will not have effaced all idealistic camouflage to return to reality, they will not have found the strength to overthrow dictatorship once and for all.

Translated from the French by FRANCES KEENE □

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History's Carnival

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Simon Leys

Changes in Communist China

Earlier this year, Simon Leys, the distinguished author of Broken Images and Chinese Shadows, led an informal discussion sponsored by the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas. The following passages from a transcript of his remarks have been excerpted and edited slightly. The concluding two paragraphs have been taken from an article by Simon Leys that appeared in the French periodical L'Express. We thank Mr. Leys for permission to use this material. — EDS.

Shortly before coming to visit the United States, I went to Hong Kong to interview a number of Chinese friends and some others who were citizens of the People's Republic and had just come out, or had returned to China recently to visit relatives. What I have to say here, essentially, is a summary of these people's reports.

On the theoretical level, they say, the changes are enormous. Revisionism, in China, has reached the point not only of overturning Maoism but, to some extent, has breached Marxist dogma. There is a very important statement by Deng Xiaoping saying that the ultimate criterion of truth is pragmatic; that we will adopt whatever works in practice, even if it means discarding aspects of Marxist theory. This may be shocking to faithful Maoists outside of China; inside China it is taken pretty much for granted. Why, you may now read articles in the press saying that there is much to be learned from capitalism, that there are many models to follow.

The opening of China has brought important changes. For one thing, foreigners now have much broader access to Chinese realities, including many that were previously camouflaged. Thus, I know of people who went to visit relatives in remote and poor

villages that are anything but showplaces. They found an appalling state of poverty, people hovering on the edge of starvation.

At the same time, the Chinese have been exposed to the realities of the highly developed, industrialized West (and Japan) through television, newsreels, etc. There is no private TV but each unit, each factory, has its set in a common room. With newsreels in movie theaters, the Chinese now receive striking evidence, previously denied to them, of life in such cities as New York and Tokyo. There appears to be a deliberate design on the part of the Chinese leadership to be blunt in showing China's backwardness to foreigners, while compelling the Chinese themselves to see how advanced the outside world is. This comes as a shock, and Deng hopes to use the shock value of this exposure to press the urgency of his principal goal: modernization.

In addition, the Deng leadership now has decided to send students overseas—with the goal of 10,000 by 1985. Compared to the immediate past, this is an impressive figure, though far from what it used to be. (In the time of the decadent Manchu court, in 1907, I think there were 40,000 Chinese students in Japan alone. . . .) Yet, it has to be recognized that opening China to the technology of the advanced West may also have side effects. I think that one of the real achievements of the Maoist system was in domestic affairs. Mao,

at least, restored the confidence of the Chinese people in their own resources. This self-confidence had been nourished since 1949, and it was no small achievement.

Some effects of shaking this self-confidence can be counterproductive. It may create a feeling of rootlessness. For example, people see what has been achieved in Taiwan, and here they are, after 30 years of Communist rule, lagging behind what the old, rotten Kuomintang has managed to accomplish. The Chinese people may well ask, What are we doing? It can seem hopeless, modernization an impossible task. This, then, is a two-edged sword: you can urge modernization, but you cannot suppress discouragement about the enormous gap that has to be bridged.

The overall picture you get of China today is one of darkness, moral and political bankruptcy, with the feeling that, had the Maoist experiment been carried further, it would have led to complete catastrophe. In that sense, the elimination of the "Gang of Four" is not so much a modification of the system as, ultimately, a move to salvage the system. It is quite idle to speculate on the conflicts and vanities of Deng and Hua Guofeng. Well, so they hate each other. But, whoever wins in the end, what other policy could they possibly pursue? It is a matter of survival. The situation is desperate, the choices are bitter. In these terms, when Deng builds his program around the central theme of modernization, he is getting back into the mainstream of Chinese history, the dynamics of which carried into the early years of the People's Republic, from 1949 to the mid-'50s. But this capital was wasted in assorted experiments—such as the Hundred Flowers, the Cultural Revolution, the Great Leap Forward.

Modernization in China indeed has a tradition that antedates the revolution. Deng's intentions in this direction are clear enough but the realities we spoke of before still present shocking contradictions. Chinese friends now go back to the countryside from which they came 30 years ago, and they return

with heartbreaking impressions: nothing has changed—it's the same, damned situation. They go back to a countryside that still seems to live in feudal times, its medieval beliefs and superstitions little modified, and they find a depressing material situation that, sometimes, has even deteriorated.

I have heard some extraordinary stories. A friend of mine went back to visit a village in Hunan, and he had to spend the nights about 60-70 miles from his village home. Since he could not stay overnight in his family's house, he had to make the long trip back and forth every day. Each time his car was preceded and followed by a military complement of army jeeps, fore and aft. This escort back and forth to his village puzzled him, especially as his relatives were reluctant to talk about it. But after some time he broke the ice, and he learned that, no, he was not under surveillance; the escort was provided for his protection! There were bandits about in the countryside, just as in former times! Bandits created during the floods. . . .

Again, we know so little of China. We know about the big earthquake in Tangshen because we have seismographs. The earthquake was recorded by instruments and we knew about it, but we did not know how many victims there were. A German diplomat, stationed in Peking, received an inquiry from his country requesting details on the earthquake. There he was, about two hours by train from where the biggest earthquake in Chinese history had occurred, and he hadn't the faintest idea of how extensive the damage was, whether there were 10 or 10,000 or 100,000 casualties. There are as many victims as the government says there are; the government tells you nothing. At long last, a month later, we learn that there were 700,000 victims—and that is it, that is as much as we may know.

Yet by courtesy of the seismographs, we did know that a big earthquake had occurred. But, what few people know, is that the year before, no, for two successive years, there had been floods that caused greater devastation in

human lives than the earthquake! The figures involved are staggering. I don't think there was a single line in the overseas newspapers about the 800,000 people who died in the Hunan floods. This fact is, simply, not news, it does not exist. But those unreported floods drove peasants out of their villages; people roamed the countryside, some turned to begging in the cities, some became highwaymen.

I spoke of the persistence of feudal customs. Peasant households still buy a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old wife for their eight- or nine-year-old son. The family gets one more hand to work on the farm, the household a servant. Interestingly enough, this ancient custom has completely disappeared on Taiwan; not because the policies of Chiang Kai-shek were more enlightened than those of Chairman Mao—very simply, and practically, Taiwan has reached a point where a sixteen-year-old daughter can bring home more money by going to work in a factory. If the father wants to force her into a marriage with someone she doesn't like, she takes off on her own, finds a factory job, and supports herself. Modernization, on Taiwan, has disposed of a feudal remnant. In the most simplistic of Marxist terms, habit and mentality cannot succumb without economic motivation, without improving the standard of living. It is in this sense, I think, that Deng is trying to say that to revolutionize China is to modernize China—that modernization is the real revolution.

All this, of course, is rather theoretical. On the practical level, the changes have been very inadequate. These changes, for example, have given the intellectuals some reasons to rejoice, if only because they were so completely repressed for ten years. Some now have regained positions of eminence and prestige. Yet, many of them are supercautious; they have been badly burned before. And they may perceive potential hazards. Deng's policies are proceeding blindly as it were, and they may recreate a situation that Mao, at least,

understood. Mao lacked the solution but saw the problem: how to bridge the gap between the countryside and the cities, and how to bring the two into harmony. In encouraging a privileged, urban China, Deng is widening the gap, and this could have dramatic consequences.

Chinese youth is responding warmly to the new directions. But this generates new hopes and demands that may be impossible for Deng to meet. The problems of modernization cannot be solved overnight; this has to be a long and painstaking process, and the people do not realize it. These expectations, unrealized, could produce a severe backlash.

Back to the countryside. The peasants are very little touched by the new policies and certainly skeptical of them. A paradox remains. The Cultural Revolution, which was a disaster for urban China, was a bonus for the countryside. The villagers never had it so good as during the Cultural Revolution—simply because of the breakdown of the central government. They were left on their own. They could kill the pig and eat it!

Now, under a centralized leadership, the villagers find themselves in a more difficult position. They are worried that the proclaimed modernization will be accomplished at their expense, benefiting the cities while they pay for it. There might be, for example, an Iranian-type modernization. I think that the Shah seriously intended to modernize Iran; but, in the process, he managed to impoverish greater numbers of people. That same kind of imbalance could occur in China too.

Four "modernizations" have been spelled out: they are to be carried out in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defense. But the main "modernization" has never been spelled out and defined: the modernization of the *system*. How can China be modernized when its only implement for doing so is the completely reactionary, theocratic Chinese Communist party? What

kind of modernization can it achieve? It is all meshed in contradictions that have always hobbled the Chinese CP.

A particular problem is the mired middle- and low-level bureaucracy. I have sometimes been charged with being unfair to the present Chinese bureaucracy. Cowardice, timidity, evasion of responsibility, of course, are common to bureaucracies everywhere. But what makes the Chinese bureaucracy “special” is that its area of presumed competence is so all-encompassing. In most other countries, where you have the same stupid bureaucrat, there is still a variety of activities that escapes the bureaucracy. But in China you must go through the bureaucracy for everything. By being “omniscient,” the bureaucracy manages to paralyze everything, and Deng’s task is accordingly that much more complicated.

These bureaucrats are scared by Deng’s policies, and rightly so, because they operate down to the grass-roots level. They have to carry the onus of reform, and they understand quite well that reform is at loggerheads with the system itself. Over the long run, it all has to end in a basic clash: either the regime clamps down and the reforms go forward—or the regime has to back down and cancel the reforms. Consider then: if it comes to the point where the reforms have to be canceled, well, better not to have participated in them—because on that day to have done so will be your crime, your guilt. . . . In the meantime, it is safer to do as little as possible, get by with lip service. Obviously, this can be paralyzing, and the Deng leadership appears to be aware of it—at least to some extent.

The problem of legality has surfaced in mass-oriented posters and in the press. They say, We need the rule of law. And when the leadership talks about legality, it is probably sincere. Deng and his friends experienced at first hand the brutalities, imprisonment, torture of the Cultural Revolution. They know something about the absence of socialist legality. But how do you speak of

legality in a country where the supreme leader of 900 million people, Hua, is in power on the strength of six words scribbled on a piece of paper by the senile Mao: “With you in charge, I am at rest”? What is to prevent a coup d’état?

Is the “Gang of Four” getting a fair trial? The way they and their followers are being purged is an imitation of the Gang’s own methods. Four or five leaders were accused in a public meeting afterward. There is a desire to restore legality, but the means for doing so are the same old illegal methods.

We return to a basic contradiction: either the reforms are carried through to their logical conclusions or the whole system explodes, once the logic of reform becomes too dangerous to the basic system. I don’t know how the contradictions will be resolved.

Whoever has some experience with totalitarian regimes—in particular, Communist—cannot avoid a profound skepticism as to the ability of these regimes to modify their nature. Whoever has any familiarity with Chinese culture and history necessarily acquires an unlimited confidence in the capacity of the Chinese to transform, adapt, to metamorphize in a creative way everything they borrow, everything imposed upon them from the outside. From the start, China and its present regime found themselves on a collision course; the test of force now seems underway. There’s no doubt that in the long run the Chinese will finally know how to swallow, digest, and, completely transform communism—perhaps preserving only the name through a purely formal, somewhat ironic process.

The problems, as I see them, are gigantic. But, nevertheless, most Chinese observers—with the exception of young refugees who retain a bitter skepticism as to the capacity of the regime to transform itself—manifest a remarkable optimism, even those among them who, previously, held the most fixed prejudices with respect to the Peking regime. To the extent that the traditional pragmatic genius of the Chinese may find some possibility of deploying its capacities for initiative and invention, optimism is probably justified. □

George Konrád

Face and Mask

*George Konrád is a distinguished Hungarian novelist; two of his novels have been translated into English, *The Case Worker* and *The City Builder*. The essay below was first delivered as a talk at a recent congress of PEN in Stockholm.—EDS.*

Literature is an ironic mask. It knows that's what it is. A nonironic mask is a lie. The mask is a metaphor for the face; it is at once sharp-featured and enigmatic. The faces of others are a few simplified lines; when recalling them, I see my friends' masks with my mind's eye. Ancestors, gods, demons have only masks—masks that, with their aggressive sharpness, rise above our redundant faces. My face was shaped by nature and time; my masks by me alone. That's why they are so abstract, simplistic—truly human creations. We need masks as much as we need words; we couldn't communicate without them. We introduce ourselves and wave our masks before one another the way we wave our hats. The writer is a makeup artist; he manufactures myths, creates masks, looks behind them and discovers other masks.

The row of masks forms an endless, mystical continuum; behind each mask there is always another. If I like a man, his face is an emblem of the universe; if I don't, it's a death mask. We paint one another's masks; then we become suspicious of them and tear them off. There are as many masks as there are relationships, which makes thinking about the subject difficult. Try to talk about last night's party on the telephone, and you'll be seizing moments out of a stream of memory and stringing them together according to the corrective logic of chance, in a sequence prompted by hidden emotions. As we talk

I about others, we construct their sometimes amusing, sometimes insipid masks. In truth, we are looking for the face, the one and only; all masks are but approximations of this one face. But because we can never be sure that we see the face looking at us, we place masks over it, though none of them really fits—the face does smile through. It is impossible to discover the face. Two infinities can't cross paths—two faces cannot contemplate each other. Without a mask, it seems, we cannot come together. A mask is an epistemological joke.

Every culture has its storehouse of masks and costumes, history its hall of fame. In the pantheons stand the heroes and traitors, the charismatic leaders and brooding thinkers, the captains of industry and the chief magistrates, all of them acting out their roles, submitting to their masks. Moses and Christ, Buddha and Mohammed, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Hitler and Stalin—we can imagine their masks, never their faces as they sleep, love, wash up. That's where literature begins, with Napoleon's wet, chubby back bending over an army wash stand in *War and Peace*. We observe the severe and intense face of our culture in party headquarters, executive suites, in nuclear bombers; it is like an imminent blow. The people wearing these stern masks would rather push the starter button on atomic weapons than allow the sanctity of state

borders to be violated. Irrespective of their political rhetoric, they are members of a humorless world body. But that is their job. A pompous statesman can still be an important statesman; books written by pompous writers can't be all that good. I am in moral sympathy with my profession because it questions the order-giver's mask. Every writer worth his salt experiences the anarchistic temptation to unmask these grave-visaged monsters down to the bare bones. Literature expresses our culture's anxieties, its bad conscience, its self-deprecating smile, its message to the centuries that we need not take things so deadly seriously.

The discrepancy between face and mask is made into a moral issue. There is nothing wrong with this as long as we are aware of it. There is no lover who is not looking for the real face of the beloved, and who does not manage nevertheless to find pleasure in other faces. We are always afraid that what we see is not the real thing, that the world of the senses conceals a terrible and sublime essence. I write in order to pull off my masks; I shed my roles one by one. First I get rid of the conventional masks; then come the odder ones. Peer Gynt, who is saddened by the realization that he is like an onion and no amount of peeling could bring him closer to a hard core, actually expresses the Hegelian plaint of his creator. As though there were a difference between semblance and substance. One finds the latter only in pedantically contradictory tomes. To the sensible observer, the manifold essences of our race are like a masked ball where the dancers are somewhat scrawny and the affair itself is a little tiresome. Essence is but the mystical hypothesis of professors, who are not the most entertaining people in the world. Those who talk about essence evidently have a low opinion of masks; they object to them on moral grounds. As far as I am concerned, though, I wouldn't want my essence separated from my appearances, for this operation, if taken seriously, requires a bullet. What does Peer Gynt have against his masks? If anything, he should be happy with them. A good novel is masked truth; the gallows, a naked lie.

Why does a writer play hide-and-seek? Why does this old man want to be a young girl, and the young girl an old man? Literature is a mask that looks like a face. Audiences knew that Richard III, who chose to be a villain, was an actor with a painted face and a ball of rags for a hump; still they threw things at him. Why do I cry over my favorite fictional heroes? Why am I waiting anxiously for the cowboy in white to arrive and have it out with the villain in black? Of course, the good guys wear masks too, not only the bad guys. Neither is really right—one is not truly good, the other is not really bad. We just watch them and confront them with each other. But who are we then in this sea of masks? Only others wear masks and we don't? Let's look at the ideologically oriented writer for a moment. He could be a party secretary, a bank president, or even a general. He is a painter of masks who conceals the fact that he too wears them, and is therefore a bigger liar than the rest. I prefer party secretaries or bank presidents to such writers. What is good about literature is that in the multitude of masks it maintains stoically, even when hounded, that it is all a game.

A state secretary shakes hands and wrinkles his brow like a state secretary should. The role is encrusted on his person, though it doesn't become his face because he can easily exchange his role for another. If he is relieved of his duties, his face changes too. Society cannot exist without roles, and devises ideologies to go with them. Entrepreneurs and workers, men and women, even school-children can only interact and behave in an acceptable manner if they know the rules of the game. If children do not learn the roles of those around them, or find out how to act with people, they live in a dream world where they are unable to find their bearing, where anything can happen. The mentally ill live in such a world—they cannot adjust their self-conceived roles to fit those assumed by others.

Each culture and ideology has its time-honored system of roles and stereotypes, its

iconography. The clichés of political life are rather crude: our allies are always right, the enemy is evil. If a political system can't create a pragmatically flexible iconography, then all those who will not conform to the roles sanctioned by it will become its enemies. It will send bombers over Vietnam and tanks to Prague and Budapest. These are panic reactions; the rulers of the world are afraid their empires will crumble if in one remote corner people try to live according to their own rules. The present rulers of the world are at most hysterics; they are not paranoid like Hitler and Stalin were, whose iconographies were murderously simple. Anyone who did not constantly wear the mask prescribed for him was doomed.

People insist on their role because it makes them feel secure; but they squirm in it because it's uncomfortable. Our mask is limited, but our face is elusive, showing itself only when we play our part ineffectively, when we abuse our role, or try to renew it. Our face is vaguer and richer than our role. Writers have always tried to remind their readers of the tension between face and mask—they describe the mask and then question it, puzzle out its secrets, and try shamelessly to catch the real face as though it were some rare deep-sea creature that appeared only for an instant. Literary commonplaces: the virtuous citizen who is a criminal, the virtuous wife who is a whore. Let's pay attention to what people do rather than to what they say. We have good reason to be skeptical—given the ground rules of our culture, we are all liars. The truth-hunters return with the trophies of camouflaged sins, passions, maladies. And whatever is camouflaged eventually becomes the intellectual model of the age. Marx discovered the exploiter even in the charitable employer, and the age needed this realization. The new model is more substantial than the original; through it the self-portrait of a society takes shape. If the 19th-century novel attempted to distinguish between the truth of the face and the falsity of the mask, then the 20th-century novel gave up trying, and with accusing sarcasm merely depicts faceless creatures, empty masks.

The writer is expected by his sponsors to enliven the approved but sketchy masks of the official culture. He is expected to make moving symbols out of bank presidents or party secretaries; he is asked to show that they, too, are sensitive human beings. If he doesn't endow them with a few faults, how can their virtues shine? They must appear a little flawed so their flawlessness can become that much more convincing. A writer has privileges. Sholokhov's iconography was more complex than Stalin's; it took a while for the latter to accept it. In the end, though, he may have discovered parallels between the two. We need literature. We talk, tell stories, explain why we are right, keep redoing our self-portraits—there is so much literature in all of this. In comparison, written literature is meager and saddled with all kinds of obligations. It must shape the masks of witches and fiends and place them on heretics, lest the stability of our roles should be disturbed.

For the sake of law and order, we need a series of stylized positive and negative roles. State socialist as well as bourgeois society must besmirch the name of antistate subversives, and praise to the sky the law-abiding citizen. This firmly entrenched iconography, this fixed hierarchy of good and evil is but a picture book of society's moral dictates, censorship in disguise. It would be more difficult to conduct war if these picture books didn't get people to hate passionately traitors and deserters and enemy agents. Isn't it enough to fear a court-martial; should we also be afraid of becoming disgusting creatures like these? We all know that the official culture labels its own spy a hero and the enemy's a monster. The worker is a good man if he is satisfied with the conditions of life offered to him by his capitalist boss or state employer; if he is not satisfied, he is an idler, a troublemaker, a hooligan. Marching soldiers are fine boys; demonstrating students, riff-raff. Conformist rhetoric produces a whole legion of inspiring models—from champion athletes to intrepid police inspectors. The rebel—even if not made out to be an out-and-out scoundrel—should in some ways be

suspect. Let him be sick; make him a sexual deviant, a drug addict. Let it be easy—if not to jail him—to lock him in a mental hospital.

The counter cultures also develop their iconography, and they, too, have their share of moral-ideological prejudices. Whoever is on top is selfish, narrow-minded, cynical; those on the bottom are loyal, upright, wholesome. The ones on top live in plenty but in a spiritual desert; they have subordinates but no friends. If they need a sexual partner, they have to buy one; he or she is ugly, impotent, frigid. They are witty but never profound, widely read but only to impress others. They have art collections but no taste. The counter cultures that emerged in the '60s in both East and West have their own heaven and hell, and depending on how close we are to their ideologies we are consigned to either one or the other. The dominant and counter cultures of our age, in both East and West, expect literature to bring to life, and fit into a canonized iconography, abstractly ideological masks. They make readers identify totally with roles deemed positive, and they get them to hate whole-heartedly roles deemed negative. Literature of average worth succeeds in doing just this.

The East European state socialist societies are ideological-political societies. Their conflicts are concealed; they cannot be expressed openly, for their articulation offends the state culture whose cornerstone is the unverifiable assertion that all power belongs to the people. In an ideological society literature plays a more important role than in a bourgeois society, which explains why there are at times heated debates about whether a certain hero's or novel's world view can be reconciled with the accepted iconography. Thanks to a sardonic providence, the irrepressible societal unconscious—a parallel culture that cannot but exist—keeps confronting the official iconography with portraits that cannot be made to conform to it. This confrontation has its limits; it is possible to imagine autonomous

modes of conduct that cannot be integrated into the state culture. They take their place in a barely tolerated underground literature or, worse, in a prisoner's dock. The dock is not a tempting enough place for most writers not to want to conclude a more or less honorable separate peace with the official icons.

Eastern Europe is a place where cultural achievements—and the achievers—ought to be observed with serious epistemological doubts. In societies whose ideals supposedly have already been realized, it is the intellectuals responsible for creating culture who are exercising more and more power, and becoming their culture's—and thereby their own—censors. We are justified in cheerfully desanctifying so-called high culture, including literature. Indeed, state socialism entices us to raise questions. The temptation to strip intellectual activity of its rhetoric is the only consolation for the disadvantages of living in such societies. The process of demythification may not be too popular, but I think it's more liberating than the introduction of a new ideology. Historically, we are confronted with a new kind of challenge; it is just possible that rule by intellectuals is not a passing phase but a new stage in civilization. The intelligentsia is the only class that has the capacity to make its rule flexible, appealing, irresistible—one that can integrate its self-criticism in its power structure. Today their rule is still not very attractive. The responses to the chimeras of yesterday's executions and today's arrests—the accusations, the complaints—are still neurotically monotonous. But those who desire to be discerning rather than virtuous in Eastern Europe today ought to make sure that, having wriggled out of the web of state-socialist romanticism, they do not fabricate a new kind of dissident romanticism whose major flaw is that it enjoys no clear autonomy vis-à-vis Western culture.

They say literature is a world created through the window of the mind. The universality of our novels is of course

reducible to a mask. But whose? For us writers, the world at large is not a universe, for we cannot touch it; nor is it a world of matter—we cannot penetrate that either. And even of the world of man, only the segment we know is our own. My world as a writer is right here in my head; I am my world. My collected works add up to my mask. Facts exist only as masks, the face as an ideal vision. If the face were a fact, it would only be one out of a myriad faces, as accidental as a photograph. Literature, painting, the cinema took it upon themselves to look into the problem of the human face. Our self-portraits come out better if we remember that our very selfhood is nothing but a religious presumption, though it's true that we need our religious presumptions almost as much as we need our feet. But let us suppose that I do have a face. If I do, it is infinite, encompassing all the possible faces I may have. The faces of others are always finite; the less I know about them, the more finite they are. Often they are no more than simplified caricatures. A novel is invariably an author's self-portrait and his friends' caricatures. But my self-portraits are also defined by the metaphors of my historical environment. I can only see myself the way it is possible to see me here and now. We come full circle: a literary work is the author's mask.

A smile, a look of terror are part of the face, but so are the things that make us smile or terrify us. Let's face it: literature is anthropocentric. No matter how objectively I try to describe a tavern in my novel, it is part of a self-portrait. What I select from its countless components says something about me. The criticism that realist fictional characters are not real enough wins the prize for naiveté. Why should they be real? Insisting on literal realism is as strange as expecting a magician to actually cleave in two his partner locked in the box. Who would deny that all literature, including the dullest documentary variety, is fiction, a mask, whose truth cannot be verified? We may be sure of only one thing: it makes an impact on us or it doesn't. The most recent notable theory of the novel, that of the *nouveau roman*, tried with positivist

ambition to impose the methodological criteria of the natural sciences on literature. Actually, this scientistic theory is the twin sister of Marxist aesthetics, which also condemned literature to mirroring reality. Poor literature, what else can it do? As though it were our *task* as people to live on Planet Earth. Where else could we live? We can think of nothing that is not part of reality.

The question becomes exciting when we have to define the essence of reality, and even more so when a body or institution, in order to keep the writer in check, has a monopoly over a definition. But then it's no longer an epistemological question we are talking about, but one that has to do with the exercise of power. Courts, party headquarters, university professors are no more qualified to judge whether or not a writer is representing reality than the reader or the writer himself. Their opinion is as hypothetical as the work they are discussing. All works are realist because in them an author's consciousness is patterned into a text. The real question is always whether or not we like that text, whether it holds our interest.

Literary works are judged to be truthful or mendacious by contemporary readers and by posterity according to whether or not they can be reconciled with their own ideologies. Classical works have endured because, having confused and cut through officially sanctioned iconographies, they never fulfilled their ideological functions, and therefore the proponents of various ideologies were defenseless against them—they could neither swallow them nor spit them out; rather than enlisting the works in their battles, they allowed themselves to be seduced by them. When *Crime and Punishment* and, later, *War and Peace* were published, neither the conservative nor the progressive Russian press was pleased. The works conformed to neither iconography; they transcended the ideologies of the age. Real literature always finds a perspective—that of the independent-

mindful individual—from which both the prevailing and alternative hierarchy of roles can be observed with irony. Abstract schemes can never be reconciled with concrete experiences; it is the very tension between the two from which literature draws sustenance. That is why the iconography of great literature is so provocatively enigmatic. What can the ideological mind do? First it fights off the masterpiece by immunizing itself against it; then it tries to canonize it.

The profoundly ironic works go beyond the naive question, Who is right? They represent conflicts between A and B convincingly, develop them from both points of view, without any attempt to arbitrate. The meaning of tragedy is that there is no higher, cathartic truth. In this sense, tragedy is indeed an ironic genre. However, concentrated irony is too volatile and would self-destruct if it didn't mix with the roughage of human stupidity. Thanks to this beneficial compound, today's outrage can be calmly classified tomorrow—its inferior elements can be melted down. How many dullards keep recycling Marx's and Freud's ideas? Second-rate Marxists and Freudians have turned the masters' radiant ironies into lists of regulations. One of them was expropriated by state socialism, the other by consumer capitalism, although—because they were up against genius—neither system could do a perfect job. Still, miracles can become commonplace; they can be made to show what they are good for.

Good literature is a cultural anomaly. Its portraits are morally unclassifiable, though they give some people a chance to worry endlessly about whether or not a work is optimistic or pessimistic, realist or nonrealist, ethical or cynical—in short—enabling them to fret over questions that may be relevant to “useful” literature, but that are utterly meaningless when it comes to great literature. It's sheer illusionism to maintain that a talented writer can find one of the institutionalized iconographies totally congenial. The more gifted he is, the more he relies on his own surest experiences, on what

he knows about himself. He knows that he at least is not what he is supposed to be, and suspects that others are also not what they are trying to be, and this untamable deviation he exhibits in the cultural arena in the form of a personal confession or as a multicharacter self-portrait. All of us are infinitely more than what we seem, and our essential literature brings to light little bits of our extra dimensions. We work our potential selves out of our system. Not being philosophers, we are not duty-bound to reconcile the contradictions between immanent existence and utopian essence. It is antinomies that keep us alive. For us there is no orderly development, no progress, there are only more forceful lunges toward new suffering, new joys. We can afford to construct as dizzying an array of masks as society. Because we take pleasure in seeing a multitude of masks, we shudder at the thought of anyone trying to make the world more homogeneous. But not even the strongest talents can completely forsake the intellectual conventions of their age—its myths and countermyths. We abandon one iconography, construct another, and are shocked to learn that after a while *that* is given official status somewhere.

A symptom of a civilization in crisis: the face becomes vacant, devoid of mystery, an outline, a textbook illustration of the cult of money in the West, and of state power in the East. The 20th century has done much to obliterate the face. Do organized criminals have faces? Do prisoners, shot into a mass grave? Does the happy child in a chocolate ad? Or masturbating girlies on picture postcards? Does the minister of finance, or the chief of staff issuing statements, have a face? Or do cultural celebrities as they accept their prizes? These are all transparent faces, with no depth, no mystery, no autonomy. They are overdetermined faces that promise no surprises, no unexpected frowns. They are faces with no stories behind them—programmed, mass-produced, universal faces. They live up to their norms; they are what they should be.

This is what a middle-class family in its comfortable house is supposed to look like. When they appear nightly in every home, smirking, lying, we think that it would be strange indeed to depict social types in novels the way Balzac did.

Society learns from the home screen what society is like. A girl looks at her dead father—he does look like a corpse for he resembles the dead she has seen on TV. Television has become the primary source of our knowledge of man, our transcendental reality. Every face—the head of state's as well as the janitor's, the entire iconography—becomes the property of the media. Men and women reveal their innermost secrets in national magazines, and the secrets are no more different than two cans of sardines. We put on film the process of birth and death; our sexuality, our solitude have become everybody's prey. From our easy chair we watch faces in a paroxysm of love and hate, in the throes of death. Ours is a voyeur culture in hot pursuit of the individual face that, as soon as it is captured, becomes a mass product. The media have stolen, capitalized, nationalized our faces. There is nothing we long for more than the face.

People in mass societies are nostalgic for the ineffable bliss of being an individual; on the home screen guru-prostitutes offer us the secret of happiness—and themselves. The more mysterious you are, the higher your price can be. When seeking success, it's advisable to pretend you are not. Work out the strategy of spectacular hibernations; retreat into silence in Katmandu, to be able to lecture about it later at Berkeley or Harvard. Return from clinical death and give an interview about the experience. Murder young girls mysteriously and wave your handcuffed wrist toward the thronging cameras. Let your face be the reflection of the screen, the product of the media—build up your image. Your face is not enough in demand? A new beauty preparation, a beard, a mustache, a face lift might help. Want to be still more interesting? Take hormones, change your sex surgically—people are bound to pay

more attention to an androgynous transvestite. Your culture surrounds you with aggressive offers; it wants to rape your face, and you let it. Whom are you trying to convince in your fumbling way that you do exist?

What can we do? We keep peeling, stripping down our face; we shape it out of the paradoxes of our consciousness, and try to make it firmer, less accidental. We throw light on its mechanism, turn our consciousness inside out like a glove, show how it became the fulcrum of our diverse constructs. This face is unlike the one outlined by statistical probability and the available norms. The more irregular we are, the more we are. Our literature is a ceaseless movement between an obviously alienated mask and one that's somewhat less alienated. This voluble self-dismantling is what literature is all about. We produce imaginary objects, imagine known and unknown people, create a mythology. We construct our inner face, a labyrinth that, if successful, can become an amusingly complicated place. We invite our readers to move through our secret anxieties, our prophecies, our despair.

We organize a sightseeing tour of our nightmares. Buy my book for ten dollars and take a trip through my mind! We lure the readers into a funhouse of our own making. If all goes well, they'll shudder, get aroused, rebel, cringe, taste the fear of death; then, at the end of the book, somewhat exhausted, they'll leave our minds. It's quite possible that in following us, they will have taken a nice excursion in their own labyrinth, too. They will get to know us a little, though we have no idea who they are. But then the baker or the worker in the munitions factory doesn't know either who receives the bread or the bullet—that's no longer their concern. We're no bigger whores than our contemporaries. We'll take anyone who bought a ticket on a journey through the orchards and ogres of our imagination. We are as honest as any travel bureau; just as they take care of their

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customers in Bangkok, Dubrovnik or Mallorca, we, too, can guide ours through our internal masks—let them laugh, let them be horrified.

Face it: we are part of the entertainment industry, we make good our readers' temptations. We can be murderers and suicides, seducers and cuckolds, great men and little men. For the readers' sake—and perhaps not only for theirs—we enliven and enhance ourselves. We may have killed someone, or we may not have. Not for a second do we maintain that our stories are true; nobody really expects them to be. What my reader wants to know is not whether or not I killed or gave birth; he wants me to help him imagine what giving birth or killing is like. We make no secret of the fact that we are mask-

merchants; but if our wares are halfway decent, the reader will be convinced for a while that our characters are real—the angel, the magus, the smiling child in the manger. He needs them all because they are present in him, too. With each new sentence we surprise the reader; we make him believe our masks, then go ahead and deprive him of his certainties—let him make love to, or break off with, our hallucinations. At the end of the trip he'll be a little more mask-sensitive, which may be the only moral gain to be had from literature. Our good readers aren't fooled by phonies who do not bother to write over their fakeries: a novel. Our good readers know that their families and colleagues are also characters out of a novel, and smile when those people forget who they are.

Translated from the Hungarian by IVAN SANDERS □

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Thoughts on Tear Gas

A Document from Israel

Introductory Note

Beit Jallah is a lovely but restive town outside of Jerusalem, on the Bethlehem road. On March 21, 1978, students in Beit Jallah assembled to protest the Israeli incursion into Lebanon, begun six days earlier to repay in kind the murderous Palestinian assault upon an Israeli bus on the coastal highway. Hopes for the conclusion of a peace with Egypt were eclipsed by the anger and distrust unleashed by the PLO attack and the Israeli response.

On the West Bank the situation seemed explosive, and Israeli troops were ordered to Beit Jallah to disperse demonstrating students. There the Israeli soldiers stormed a school, shut pupils in a classroom and hurled tear gas grenades inside. To escape the fumes, the trapped pupils leapt through windows, and 12 were injured in the fall. Or so they and their teachers claimed. Israeli authorities immediately denied that violence had taken place, however, and Western correspondents who credited the reports of these witnesses were accused of spreading "horror stories." The Israelis had their hands full defending their operation in Lebanon and were not about to add fuel to their critics' fire with tales of abuses on the West Bank.

But the cover-up of the action at Beit Jallah did not last long. Shortly afterward, the central area commander of the occupying Israeli forces ordered an investigation into the matter. The results of this investigation were released on May 2. The witnesses' account was found to be substantially correct. That same day Brigadier General David Hagoel, commander of the Israeli military government on the West Bank, was peremptorily dismissed from his post by Defense Minister Ezer Weizman. Disciplinary proceedings were also instituted by the Israeli Chief of Staff, General Raphael Eytan, against two more officers, a lieutenant colonel and a

major, who were charged with "infringement of standing orders."

So far the facts, which should give pause. Of course, Israel's security must be the primary concern of any redispotion of the contested territories. It is unfortunate, however, that the expansionists within Israeli politics have monopolized the vocabulary of security. The overwhelming demographic superiority of the native population, the inevitability of agitation and terrorism on the West Bank as Palestinian frustration grows, the mounting political costs among other nations for its reluctance to recognize the national needs of a Palestinian people—all these surely make it dangerous for Israel to persist in dominion over "Judea and Samaria." Nor do the complex military and logistical realities of the region entirely justify the visceral view that the more miles Israel controls the safer it is. Yet, beyond the requirements of security there is another, no less grave danger posed for Israel by its occupation of the West Bank, and that is the moral and psychological corrosion that ensues from ruling over a large number of people who do not wish to be ruled. This danger—of which Israel was more or less free until 1967 when it saved its own neck by seizing territory from its enemies—is the subject of the extraordinary document printed here.

"Thoughts on Tear Gas" is the transcribed account of the incident at Beit Jallah by an Israeli soldier who took part in the action, and who will go unnamed. Tossing tear gas into a school at Beit Jallah, this Israeli soldier discovered precisely what George Orwell discovered shooting an elephant in Burma—the futility of occupation, and its human costs to the occupiers.

For what finally matters is not that the Israeli government acquitted itself admirably of the affair, or that the Israeli occupation has been, by the dubious standards of such wrongs, relatively compassionate and in some ways even beneficial to the Palestinians who have endured

The document is reprinted, with permission, from *Shdemot*, 1978.

it. What matters, in the end, is that it is impossible to administer the life of another people without at some point having to behave in the tawdry manner of a colonial power—without having to search and detain and arrest and even torture, without having to control opinion and censor newspapers and proscribe assemblies, without having to raze houses and hurl tear gas into schools. No doubt, Israel does not intend to be such a power, but until some land is found over which the Palestinians may

declare themselves sovereign, it will act like one. Good intentions alone cannot maintain order on the West Bank; that task calls for “a strong hand,” as the officer in charge of the Beit Jallah operation was heard correctly to observe. It is for the Israelis to decide if they wish for long to remain a nation represented by “a strong hand,” if they wish to accept the consequences of continuing in political conditions so remorselessly damaging.

LEON WIESELTIER □

The Document

You must understand that what troubled me was the very fact that I did it. I mean, suddenly all values, everything, disappeared in an instant. In an instant I did something I didn't believe I could do. For no reason, do you understand? That's my problem.

There were disturbances. We received orders to go and make a showing. The whole thing happened after the Litani operation, the operation in Lebanon when there was unrest on the whole West Bank and so they wanted to get things under control as quickly as possible.

They threw rocks at us. There were about 20 of us. Make a showing, they told us, meaning go out and let them know you're there so they don't think it's a free for all. There was a disturbance among the students at a local college. We went there to arrest them and to disperse the crowd. To demonstrate that there is a government that looks after matters there and that taking matters into their own hands doesn't make things better. They threw rocks and bottles. At us. Before we arrived they blocked the roads. We were instructed not to enter the place where they were and from which the rocks were thrown. They pelted us with rocks and we saw them but we were forbidden to react, to throw them back or move in. We just stood there. We took cover or used our shields, our equipment. And of course at some point the blood goes to your

head, especially when you're hit by a rock. And these weren't pebbles either, but big rocks, bricks. I too was hit by a rock, in my side. There were those who received blows that really hurt. One guy was wounded in his hand, nothing too serious. But our orders were to do nothing. Every now and then someone would fire a tear-gas grenade into the air, so that the wind would carry the gas over and force them inside, and they would stop pelting us.

We were nervous. At that moment we were ready to do anything to get into the building. But there was an explicit order not to enter. Suddenly an order came over the radio to send six of us, with our commander, to a nearby school. We didn't know which school. We climbed on the jeep and reached the place. It was about five or ten minutes away—about three kilometers. We met an officer who gave us tear-gas grenades and told us to approach the school and hurl the grenades into the classrooms.

The school was two stories high. We were very hot and even glad to do it. Here, we said right away, we can get back at them. We ran as fast as we could. We left behind our weapons and helmets and shields and knapsacks—we knew they were children—and ran with our grenades. We didn't see anyone in the corridor. There were three or four classrooms with their doors closed. We opened the door,

we saw—but we didn't really see—the students. We only caught a glimpse. And they of us. It was time. I assume that if we didn't want to do it we didn't have to. The teachers were also there. They looked at us, we looked at them, for a second, and then we threw the grenade and shut the door. We even stood by the door so nobody could get out.

Afterward we received another order over the radio, as we left the corridor, to surround the school and find those who escaped. We circled the building and suddenly we saw children, eight to ten years old, against the wall with broken legs. Also, a few of them lay on the ground in the yard. About ten children. It seemed that the mothers who had brought their children saw that something was up and didn't leave the school. They sat on some ramp from which they watched. I think they were the mothers. I don't know for sure. Anyway, they saw what was done. The children seemed very frightened; the grenades were by the door and so they tried to escape through the windows.

And then, when we saw the children on the ground, we suddenly understood what we had done, we understood what had happened here. And there was someone who remarked that they hadn't really done anything to us, not a thing. We brought the children ourselves to the hospital. We went up to the school and opened the doors to let out the gas. The children fell into our hands like butterflies. Some of them simply collapsed, like butterflies collapse when they are sprayed with pesticide.

We began to think about what we had done. Four of us were kibbutzniks, and two from the city. We started to think: how could we have done this? How do you get to such a state, you a person educated in certain values and taught that another person is also a human being? How do you then go and throw a grenade at eight-year-old children? They can't even defend themselves. No chance at all. What are you doing throwing a grenade at them? Why don't you think about it? Why don't you even consider if what you're doing is right? How can you just follow all these orders without thinking twice?

It's clear that if we would have been there in the morning, before we went to that college, we wouldn't have thrown the grenade. As for me, my explanation is that this was some sort of revenge for that rock that hit me and a result of the hatred that welled up within me at that moment. When we arrived there wasn't anything going on. Could be that before we came there was a recess, which our superiors misjudged—thought that it was a demonstration. We didn't see any signs that rocks were thrown. Nothing was thrown at us. We didn't even see any students outside. The officer who was there apparently saw them outside, making strange movements, and he felt that something was going to happen and gave the order. His superior was not there, and he, too, was very shaken afterward. We knew these grenades couldn't kill. There's no way they could kill. At worst they can make you faint, and most of the time they just stink and make you cry. We saw this as a sort of revenge but we didn't think the results would be like this. That the children would get scared, wouldn't understand what was going on, and jump out the windows.

There are standing orders against entering schools and these orders were always strictly observed. And we never asked ourselves why, all of a sudden, are they ordering us to go into a school. Later it turned out that the officer had taken it on himself, that he had broken with official policy. For him we were an instrument of provocation. And they didn't start throwing stones at cars and putting up roadblocks until after it happened. We gave them the impetus. The authorities asked us how, in our opinion, is it possible to rule over 150,000 Arabs without being tough with them. They told us that we always have to remind them that we exist. Afterward, at the gates of the school, we spoke with the officer. We told him that he was crazy, that he was nuts, that we don't understand how he ever got where he was, that the best he could be was a butcher. After we had taken out all our bitterness on him he tried to explain. But he wasn't interested in debating or arguing with us—that was furthest from his mind. He had

not the slightest regret about the affair. For him it was a cause for pride—really, for pride. In the evaluation after the action he praised us for our role and said that we had acted like brave soldiers. And everybody shouted that he was lucky we were reservists and had been released from regular duty because otherwise we would have refused his order. Basically, everybody told him that the conduct of the military government leads us to believe that in many cases orders should have been refused. He replied that he likes Arabs no less than we do, but that to carry out his task properly he must act with a strong hand. And sometimes he must do extreme things to frighten the others and the most extreme thing he had done was what he asked us to do. He felt that with this action he had restored quiet to the town. So those children may have suffered for a while, but it will be good for them afterward, because there will be peace and quiet in the town.

We turned to our buddies, shaken by the episode. There were some who justified the deed and said that there is no choice, a good Arab is a dead Arab. It's very interesting, that those who were religious, who had the yarmulkes on their heads, were the ones who did the justifying, who saw some justification. Of course, not *all* religious ones felt this way. And maybe it has nothing to do with religion. They seem to believe that there is a need that this territory be ours, and they said that in order to keep them down and maintain our control we must act with a strong hand, since this is a part of the State of Israel, and we are allowed to do everything in order to keep it ours. They made this plain by how hard they struck during the disturbances. They always volunteered to strike, that bunch.

It was suggested that we stop our patrols. We stopped arresting Arabs. We arrested only when we had to. It was a personal decision. To arrest only when you have to, only when you're sure you must. Because there was an order to arrest only those who we thought might. . . . And so, when we went out on

patrol we tried to keep a low profile. We tried to patrol *our* way, not the authorities'. We began to see that when we make a great showing of ourselves it only stirs them up. And so, when we learned of a demonstration at some school, we would drive there in first gear instead of in third, and when they saw we weren't coming the demonstration would disperse.

We preferred, those of us who did this, not to discuss it among ourselves. There was sort of an agreement about this; for it was nothing to brag about. In fact, we didn't see each other very often afterward, because we had different assignments.

The principal of the school observed all that we were doing, he stood outside and didn't know what to do. Just stood there and was silent. It looked to me as if he tried to pull someone over to him, but he didn't say a word. He looked stunned.

My personal problem—as a human being, as a man who received a certain education and who has nothing against Arabs—is how did I ever get to the point where I tossed a grenade. Because if I hadn't thrown it nobody would have said anything, not to me personally. I didn't have to throw it. Nobody would have told me anything. Nobody would have known.

And so this is the question that I ask, maybe also in the wake of the Holocaust when they choked the Jews with gas. Perhaps what happened to me that moment is what happened to the Germans. Blind and thoughtless hatred. And I wonder how I am to proceed with this. Because one day it might bring me to kill people just like that. Is there in man some need to kill other people and cause them pain? And maybe in battle, if I see an Arab family, I will kill them all. This is what concerns me.

There was one of us who tried not to strike them during all the disturbances. Volunteered to keep us covered from the rear. But he also threw grenades. And after that he cried.

—Translated from the Hebrew by JONATHAN RICHLER □

Dennis H. Wrong

Bourgeois Values, No Bourgeoisie?

The Cultural Criticism of Christopher Lasch

Christopher Lasch's two recent books, *Haven in a Heartless World* (Basic Books, 1977) and *The Culture of Narcissism* (W. W. Norton, 1979), amount to an extended moral denunciation of contemporary American life, its frantic hedonism, vulgar opportunism, and pervasive hollow anxiety. Such jeremiads are scarcely in short supply these days, although Lasch brings to his task uncommon gifts of psychological penetration, historical perspective, and literary eloquence. If at times he sounds a bit like Harriet Van Horne keening in midtown Manhattan over the lost graces of life, he more often recalls the best work of Erich Fromm, David Riesman, Paul Goodman, and other outstanding practitioners of the genre that came to be known in the 1950s as "social criticism." Indeed, Lasch acknowledges his intellectual debt to these writers at the same time that he criticizes the datedness of many of their observations in the light of more recent cultural tendencies carrying us, in his view, even further into decadence.

Haven in a Heartless World focuses on the family, particularly the attacks on the traditional bourgeois family purveyed at least since the 1920s by psychiatrists, sociologists, marriage counselors, and legal reformers. The ringing declarations of independence from the nuclear family, sexual repression, male dominance, and the possessiveness of the marriage tie that filled the air in the '60s and still echo around us simply pushed to further extremes what had already been central themes of psychiatric and sociological com-

mentary 30 or 40 years earlier. It is a sad reflection on the ahistorical blindness of the social sciences embracing even their own disciplines that it takes a professional historian to point out the lack of novelty in the fashionable calls to "liberation" of recent years, which were, as Lasch insists, mostly pushing at unlocked doors.

In *The Culture of Narcissism*, Lasch extends his survey of American culture from the family to changing definitions of success, advertising, and the public-relations style in politics, professional sports, education, criminal justice, fashions in pediatrics and child-rearing manuals, feminism and the "sexual revolution," and attitudes toward aging. His chapters on these topics originally appeared as separate articles, which are brought together under the "culture of narcissism" rubric and preceded by an account of the "narcissistic personality" based on recent psychoanalytic theory and clinical evidence.

Lasch's Freudianism is a major strength of his cultural criticism, providing it with a foundation that makes it more than a cantankerous catalogue of complaints. In *Haven in a Heartless World*, he describes how in order to get rid of Freud's pessimism and alleged "biologism," the neo-Freudians of the cultural school in the '30s and '40s and Talcott Parsons and his followers in the '50s adulterated Freud, eliminating his insistence on the importance of the unconscious, the primacy of infant experience, and the in-

evitability of repression and intrapsychic conflict as constants in the universal resistance offered by human nature to the most ambitious efforts to “socialize” it. His case has been made before but not with such close attention to the actual literature of family sociology and the practice of the therapeutic professions making use of it. Far from taking a new tack, recent feminist and liberationist critics of the family have merely gone further in the same direction in suggesting that people are perfectly capable both of improving their “relatedness” to others and achieving greater “self-realization” in a world of loose, transitory personal ties free of normative and institutional constraints. I am grateful to Lasch for noting that my own widely accepted criticism of the oversocialized conception of man in modern sociology was frequently misunderstood by rebels against “establishment sociology” as a celebration of individual creativity and autonomy, whereas its actual intention was to assert a deeper determinism undercutting the sociological and rooted in the stressful interaction of biology and culture as understood by Freud.

It is a pity, however, that Lasch fails to draw on the work of Géza Róheim, Weston La Barre, and George Devereux, all of them Freudians who also did anthropological fieldwork, in refuting Malinowski’s argument against the universality of the Oedipus complex, which so greatly influenced the cultural revisionists of Freud. Had he done so, he would have been less vulnerable to the charge that he absolutizes the bourgeois patriarchal family and passes too lightly over the unnecessary suffering it imposed on human beings against which Freud himself protested. Lasch’s major point is that the decline of a parental authority, which is the source of both love and discipline, impoverishes the part of the superego Freud called the ego ideal and also deprives the individual of the psychological resources acquired in the struggle to gain freedom from the control of the parents. It is possible to recognize what has been lost by this decline

without idealizing the past—the bourgeois family itself was an ideal—and certainly without seeming to advocate a restoration of the old order, just as one can recognize that freedom and justice are most prized as values under tyranny without wishing for tyranny in order to recover a more intense appreciation of them. Lasch occasionally reminds one of the man who, when asked why he kept hitting himself on the head with a hammer, replied, “Because it feels so good when I stop.”

The main thematic chapter of *The Culture of Narcissism* examines the psychoanalytic clinical evidence showing the increasing frequency of a narcissistic personality type very different from the older kind of neurotic identified by Freud and his early followers. Drawing on the theories of Melanie Klein and Otto Sternberg, Lasch argues that the new type does not suffer from specific hysterical symptoms rooted in sexual repression but from more general “character disorders” consisting of lack of a sense of purpose in life, confused identity, and inability to form permanent satisfying relations with others. The dissolution of parental authority does not eliminate the superego but fixates it at the pre-Oedipal level where the mother is unconsciously perceived as a devouring vampire and the father as a capriciously violent, threatening monster. (Lasch here draws on Klein.) The individual never establishes secure “object relations” by learning to cope with parents who discipline the child rather than indulging his or her every impulse. An enormous fund of unfocused hostility and aggressiveness accumulates, easily converted into a self-hatred that is warded off by self-aggrandizing fantasies.

I could not agree more with Lasch’s claim for the general social and cultural significance of the psychoanalytic evidence:

By conducting an intensive analysis of individual cases that rests on clinical evidence rather than common-sense impressions, psy-

choanalysis tells us something about the inner workings of society itself, in the very act of turning its back on society and immersing itself in the individual unconscious.

But Lasch scarcely resolves any of the difficulties that have long plagued efforts to relate "personality and culture." On the issue of how or whether psychiatric patients are representative of the total population, Lasch observes that "every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology, which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure." Patients, in short, suffer from ailments that are more widely prevalent in milder forms. The discussions of sports, education, crime, and other subjects that make up the bulk of the later book can therefore be regarded as diagnoses of expressions or manifestations of a general "culture of narcissism," although Lasch neglects to trace the precise links between these areas and underlying characterological dispositions. *The Culture of Narcissism* remains a collection of loosely related essays in contrast to *Haven in a Heartless World*, a more coherent book in which originally discrete essays have been reworked into a unity.

The question of social and historical causation is a more troublesome one than the problem of representativeness. Presumably, celebrity cults, "how to" manuals, and recent avant-garde fiction—all discussed by Lasch—reflect rather than shape the narcissistic personality, or at most contribute to its secondary reinforcement. The narcissistic personality is primarily the effect of the disintegration of the family recounted at length in *Haven in a Heartless World*. But the evidence in that book for changes in the family comes itself from the clinical data of psychiatry and from the putative impact of the injunctions of the therapeutic professions against which Lasch directs such heavy fire. The "classical" bourgeois family has unmistakably disappeared, but Lasch, with his focus on deeper psychic constellations, claims considerably more than this. Even if he is right, his argument is suspiciously circular,

for he fails to present any evidence independent of clinical material that the family is in so parlous a state.

One may readily doubt that the family is actually as weakened as Lasch contends even among the educated and affluent who are receptive to the advice of applied social science, let alone among workers and most sections of the middle class. Parents still control almost exclusively the child's life and growth for his or her first three or four years, the crucially formative period according to psychoanalysis. If the decline of the extended family was exaggerated by Parsons and his followers, as indicated by several sociological studies Lasch cites, it is even less credible that the nuclear family itself has been fatally debilitated, however much this outcome may have been desired by the advocates of "liberated life-styles" abetted by family sociologists and "permissive" therapists. The family is a tough and resilient social formation not likely to succumb to the shafts of trendy shrinks and pop sociologists.

There is also a problem of historical timing. Reading Lasch's cultural criticism, one is frequently reminded of the attacks on "mass culture" so prominent in the 1950s, of C. Wright Mills's exposés of the degeneration of the goal of success into crass self-salesmanship, of the alarm regularly expressed by educators over the increasing anti-intellectualism and semiliteracy of the young, of philippics against romantic escapism in popular entertainment going back to the 1930s, of familiar diagnoses of American fears of aging and documentations of cruel and indifferent treatment of old people. I have the impression, in fact, that I have been listening to Lasch's bill of indictment for most of my life and I wasn't born, alas, yesterday. Even the recognition that character neuroses were displacing symptom neuroses dates back to the late 1930s and was invoked then by neo-Freudians to justify their modifications of Freudian doctrine.

Lasch is much too good a historian not to know all this. Indeed, he frequently cites earlier critics of American culture and often

perceptively shows their limitations, arguing, for example, that the complaints in the 1950s against conformism and the decline of individualism overlooked the survival of a Hobbesian world of narcissistic egoism beneath the mask of pretended warmth and other-direction (in Riesman's phrase). The familiarity of Lasch's complaints certainly in no way reduces their cogency, but it does cast doubt on the up-to-the-minute contemporaneity with which he introduces his case. The subtitle of *The Culture of Narcissism*, for example, is "American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations." The first sentence of the Preface refers to the end of the confidence expressed in the phrase "the American Century," and Lasch goes on to enumerate the fiscal woes of New York City, Vietnam, and the exhaustion of natural resources, as well as sundry other crises afflicting other "capitalist countries." But his trend toward narcissistic decadence obviously peaked when American "expectations" were still high and on his own evidence long antedates these recent events. Maybe the present really does indicate that "bourgeois society . . . has lost both the capacity and the will to confront the difficulties that threaten to overwhelm it," but, except perhaps for a few years in the late '50s and early '60s, rhetoric to that effect has been around as long as I can remember.

The reference to "bourgeois society" strikes an odd note, because the major thrust of Lasch's argument is to give added force to the description of our age as "postbourgeois," a far more accurate label (favored in particular by the late George Lichtheim) than "post-capitalist" or "postindustrial." But Lasch is determined to present himself as a radical of the left, even a revolutionary, despite the obviously conservative tenor of so much of his indictment of contemporary culture. This accounts, one supposes, for the curmudgeonly lack of charity he displays toward other writers whose criticisms resemble his. He praises, for example, Richard Sennett's critique of narcissism but condemns Sennett for his "revulsion against politics," a revulsion

that is scarcely equal to Lasch's own. One of the best things to come out of the 1960s was surely the delegitimation of the self-serving claims of the professions, especially medicine, but Lasch dismisses the work of Goffman, Szasz, Eliot Freidson, and David Rothman for failing to "rise above the level of a consumers' movement." These naive fellows apparently are simple meliorists rather than root-and-branch radicals. Yet Lasch barely mentions Marcuse or Ivan Illich, whose rejections of contemporary society are often very close to his own, probably because he sees them as a bit too far-out, not to say passé. Marcuse, after all, was taken in by the countercultural youth revolt, which Lasch—rightly, I think—regards as part of the problem rather than of the solution.

In Lasch's view, the decline of the family has resulted in the culture of narcissism, and the major agents of its decline have been the "helping professions" who with their claims of therapeutic expertise have breached the family's protective walls, coming between parents and children, husbands and wives, men and women. But as Lasch sees it, the therapeutic professionals have not done this simply in their own interest: they have acted as agents of corporate capitalism, extending and intensifying the assault upon individual independence and self-reliance that began with the rise of a market society over two centuries ago. Lasch thus squares his attack on the "triumph of the therapeutic" (Philip Rieff) and his affirmation of traditional bourgeois values with his own political radicalism and his rejection of apolitical or conservative critics of the self-promoting pretensions of the professions. Lasch refers to the therapeutic professions as part of a "new ruling class," but, in contrast to neoconservative "new class" theorists, he sees them not as anticapitalist but rather as a product of "monopoly capitalism" in its bureaucratized form, which has created the welfare state to stabilize it. Only a "socialist revolution," he insists, can create a new culture and overcome

the tyranny of the therapeutic ethic and of bureaucracy, both of which are but new forms of the ancient enemy, capitalism itself.

I find all this supremely unconvincing, although I share Lasch's dislike for narcissism and the therapeutic ideology that legitimates it as well as his respect for the bourgeois values of self-help and the work ethic. But a future American socialist movement would probably demand more not less help from the "helping professions." A movement chiefly animated by Lasch's values would in practice be more likely to resemble George Wallace's right-wing populism rather than one centered on traditional socialist ideas. I recently heard Bennett Berger describe a father he had interviewed in a revivalist Christian commune in California who remarked with self-satisfaction that since becoming a "Christian" he had beaten his son over a thousand times and that both of them were "the better for it." Mass acceptance of Lasch's outlook might multiply that father by millions. Lasch would certainly deplore such an outcome, but ideas as well as actions often have unanticipated consequences.

The therapeutic professions have scarcely seen themselves as providing new support for capitalism, for they have often been in the vanguard of what anticapitalist tendencies have existed in America and, for that matter, elsewhere. Possibly they are victims of the cunning of the "dialectic." But Lasch's Marxist brand of functionalism or systems theory is as tautological as other versions. Because new doctrines and reforms displacing traditional values and practices have managed peacefully to coexist with capitalism, they are therefore defined as expressions of capitalist class interests. Yet this could not help but be true of *any* changes falling short of the total revolutionary elimination of capitalism. Lasch's intransigent radicalism is a familiar posture, although his targets are less saliently political than the reformist parties and trade unions toward which that posture has often been adopted in the past. In any case, the enemy is by now securely ensconced within: Lasch himself notes that

recent years have witnessed a "protestant" revolt against the priestly psychiatric profession. If the end result is that everyone aspires to be his or her own therapist, the power of the helping professions is undermined.

To Lasch, the therapeutic professions have completed a long historical evolution that began with the separation of home and work as industrialism spread along with the growing dependence of people on the market for the necessities of life. The autonomy and self-reliance of the individual and of the family that once shaped the individual's character have been progressively undermined by remote external authorities: capitalist enterprises, centralized state bureaucracies and, finally, the professional reformers and experts who have "proletarianized parenthood" and "socialized reproduction." The beginnings of these developments carry us back to the preindustrial world, to the very origins of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. In claiming a basic continuity between the initial separation of home and work and the allegedly contemporary expropriation of child-rearing skills by the experts, Lasch seems to be looking back not merely to the heyday of bourgeois values but to the traditional society disrupted by capitalism and all the other modern revolutions. His identification of "socialism" with decentralization and local community control points in the same direction.

Philippe Ariès has shown in *Centuries of Childhood* that the family scarcely existed as a separate social group before the 18th century; in the earlier period, "the density of society left no room for the family." Families were not yet havens for the individual, "refugees from the invasion of the world" (Ariès), but were thoroughly penetrated by and hardly separable from "circles of relatives, friends, clients, protégés, debtors, etc." This world was doubtless less "heartless" than that of 19th-century bourgeois capitalism, at least for the nobility and the relatively wealthy. But why then does Christopher Lasch fail to go beyond early capitalism as a standard by which to judge our own fallen

times? He scornfully dismisses a pair of “revisionist” sociologists for their naiveté in believing that it is possible to revive the social solidarity of the medieval village as described by Ariès “without sacrificing equality, individuality, and personal freedom,” but it is not really clear just how or why Lasch differs from them. If the invasion of the family began with the birth of the modern world, why look back for an alternative image to present no further than to the halfway house of the bourgeois family?

Ariès, it so happens, is a man of the far right, a royalist and Catholic reactionary. Lasch certainly does not share his medievalist, anti-Enlightenment outlook, which probably explains why he rarely cites Ariès’s enormously influential book on the social history of the family. Lasch is generally chary about acknowledging his affinities even with moderate conservatives. He takes pains to differentiate his own views from those of such an old-fashioned neoclassical economist as Ludwig von Mises, who, like Milton Friedman, criticizes state bureaucracy without acknowledging the bureaucratization promoted by private enterprise. But von Mises is too easy a target, permitting Lasch to ignore his kinship with noneconomic cultural conservatives who have little love for capitalism, such as Ariès, Robert Nisbet (at least before his recent neoconservative polemicizing), Peter Berger, John Lukács and, most of all, Philip Rieff, from whom Lasch derives his central argument, if not its specifics, about the spread of the therapeutic ethos.

I am not objecting, let me make it plain, to Lasch’s combination of cultural conservatism with a politics of the left. This is an honorable position that I largely share myself. Lasch is clearly right to argue against the “devaluation of the past” and to insist that it is “a political and psychological treasury from which we draw the reserves (not necessarily in the form of ‘lessons’) that we need to cope with the future.” What is questionable is Lasch’s weird amalgam of all the groups he dislikes—capitalists, corporation executives, bureaucrats, New Left students, psychotherapists,

humanistic psychologists, educational radicals, hippies, and feminists—on one side of the barricades—confronting on the other side, well, it’s not quite clear just whom: presumably, a few radical intellectuals of Lasch’s kidney and perhaps the workingman resentful of a “middle-class liberalism that has already destroyed his savings, bused his children to distant schools, undermined his authority over them, and now threatens to turn even his wife against him.” The student revolutionaries of the ’60s were unusual in that, as Barrington Moore, Jr. remarks in his most recent book, they were “the first revolutionary hedonists,” but Lasch avoids full acknowledgment of the left’s traditional commitment to collectivism in whose name so many of the trends he most dislikes have been justified. Lasch is actually upholding what Marxists have long derided as “bourgeois individualism,” while claiming that it has degenerated into narcissistic egoism and minimizing the responsibility of anti-bourgeois political and cultural movements for this development.

The narcissistic search for gratification that Lasch sees as the terminal phase of a “dying culture” indeed represents what Philip Rieff calls a “remissive” casting off of the “interdicts” of the old culture rather than evidence of the birth of a new one. But are sexual repression, the sovereignty of paternal authority, the subordination of women, and the inculcation of guilt in child-rearing necessarily *intrinsic* to the values Lasch wishes to revive? Must we be liberated from our liberation from these things in order to overcome the discontents of narcissism? Were not the liberations also at least partially implicit in the values of personal freedom and responsibility themselves? Have these values been totally eroded, to the point of transformation into their opposites, by the remissive excesses of the culture of narcissism?

Some of these excesses seem to me to amount to a kind of acting out, a testing of extremes, rather than to the final dissolution

of the old culture. The public response to *The Culture of Narcissism* itself, which, like its predecessors in the 1950s, has made the best-seller lists and received enormous attention, suggests as much. I understand that it has even been taken quite seriously in psychotherapeutic circles. Doubtless, this is a manifestation of the very oversensitivity to fashion that Lasch indicts, but not every idea becomes fashionable.

Rieff has observed that "we know that old ideals do not simply repeat themselves; they

are reborn." But there are rebirths and rebirths. I, too, would like to see the sort of revival that Lasch envisages, but I doubt that his affectation of a Marxist vocabulary is sufficient to ensure against a "praxis" with the potentiality of breaking through the limits assumed by his "theory." That child-beating father in California worries me. There have been popular radical movements affirming traditional values before. "Fascism" was the name they were known by between the two world wars. □

Gevalt!

We're indebted to John Herling's excellent Labor Letter (April 7, 1979) for the following piquant item:

In a speech before the right-wing National Strategy Information Center, Albert Shanker, AFT president, declared that the AFL-CIO attitudes toward the political left are "softened tremendously."

This is reported by William Ringle, Washington correspondent for the Gannett Newspapers:

Inside the AFL-CIO attitudes toward the political left are "softening tremendously," says Albert Shanker, a vice president of the labor organization.

"Not on the part of AFL-CIO President George Meany, not on the part of Secretary-Treasurer Lane Kirkland," said Shanker, who is also president of the 500,000-member American Federation of Teachers.

But he said some of a new generation of labor leaders who have not personally experienced, or are not convinced of, the menace of communism enter into alliances for political support from left-wing groups. . . .

Shanker discussed the threat to organized labor's traditional support for a strong defense and the military in a talk Wednesday (March 28) sponsored by the dominantly right-wing, pro-military, strongly anti-communist National Strategy Information Center.

The private NSIC numbers among its members many retired generals and admirals and leading military strategists. Shanker was the first labor leader to address it. . . .

His main theme was that the AFL-CIO is becoming more susceptible to pressures from the left to reduce its support for a strong U.S. military and an anti-communist foreign policy. . . . Part of the . . . influence comes from member unions' gratitude to left-wing organizations that helped in legislative fights. Those "who want to soften the position of the AFL-CIO in international affairs" had been "tremendously strengthened" as a result of the fight over labor law reform and common site picketing and social issues, he said. Because they supported the AFL-CIO when others did not (no businessman backed the AFL-CIO on labor

law reform, he noted) "strong temporary relationships which may become permanent" resulted. "Within an hour" at its last meeting the AFL-CIO board "contributed large sums of money to organizations that it never would have given a nickel to before and that it has basic disagreements with," he said. . . .

"A kind of primitive, Marxist class solidarity on these economic issues and 'forget about this defense stuff' becomes very appealing to a bunch of people who lost a battle" [with lines drawn on a worker-management basis]. . . .

This raises the "possibility in some unions of fairly significant infiltration of groups that say, 'We're helping you on labor laws, we're helping you on these various social programs, we'd like you to work with us on the reduction of defense expenditures. . . .'"

Asked to identify the organizations he was talking about, Shanker did not, except to call one a "Washington think tank." Here is the list of organizations which are being aided by the AFL-CIO, to which Shanker refers:

Joint Council on Economic Education, Consumer Energy Council of America, No Greater Love, CARE, Atlantic Council, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Full Employment Action Council, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, National Urban Coalition, Coalition of Labor Union Women, National Urban League, United Negro College Fund, Asian-American Free Labor Institute, National Rural Housing Coalition.

Also, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Inter-Religious Housing Coalition, Fund for an Open Society, National Housing Conference, National Coalition for Disease Prevention & Environmental Health, Conference on Economic Progress, National Council of Senior Citizens, National Symphony Orchestra, Committee for National Health Insurance, COIN, The New Leader, Committee on the Present Danger, National Council on Crime & Delinquency, National Assembly of National Voluntary Health & Social Welfare Organizations. □

Cornelius Castoriadis

The French Communist Party: A Critical Anatomy

Over the past few years Dissent has printed a number of articles expressing various opinions on the complex problem of "Eurocommunism." (For such a variety of opinions, see, among other pieces in various issues, our special section, "Eurocommunism: Reality, Myth, Hope, or Delusion?" including articles by Bogdan Denitch, Lewis Coser, Irving Howe, Leszek Kolakowski, and Henry Pachter, in our Winter 1978 issue.) Below is another opinion by an independent French leftist, deeply skeptical of recent claims regarding the "democratization" of the French CP. For reasons of space, the article has been somewhat abridged.

— Eds.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The following article, reprinted here with permission, was first published in the French journal *Esprit* in December 1977. In no sense is it topical. Its purpose is to explain how a totalitarian political apparatus like the French Communist party has been able to survive and perpetuate itself for more than 30 years in a rich and "democratic" country, and during a time when French social life has become rapidly modernized.

The article also offers an interpretation of the changes in the French CP's strategy and tactics since 1972. It seems to me that recent events confirm the interpretation. The strategic impasse that has always confronted the CP remains unchanged. It is this impasse that drives the Party to its tactical "shifts." To try to explain each shift rationally would be a mistake, for essentially these shifts show that the Party's choice lies between poor alternatives. After the Union of the Left broke up in September 1977, the CP waged an increasingly violent campaign against the French Socialist party; this campaign was suspended during the elections of March 1978, only to be resumed even more violently thereafter. One may anticipate that it will continue for a long time—at least until the next presidential election campaign in 1981. Now once again, the French CP has chosen to isolate itself.

So far, the Party has paid a very modest price for all its inconsistencies and *volte-faces*. The "dissidence" of a few Party intellectuals has been effectively neutralized, and there has been no split in the organization. No doubt, many old-timers register their dissatisfaction by "voting with their feet"—they drop out with no fuss. Were national elections to be held at this moment, the CP's percentage of the total vote would shrink by perhaps two or three points. However, such fluctuations are on a scale that the French CP has experienced several times before. Everything points to the fact that it will maintain itself not so much by its "adaptations" (which are essentially verbal) to changes in French society but rather because of the rigidity of its bureaucratic apparatus, which refuses to yield one iota of control over the Party organization. The lesson here, though not new, continues to be of fundamental importance. — C.C.

Has the French Communist party truly changed? If so, to what extent and in what direction? Some evolution is suggested by the line adopted by the Union of the Left, by modifications in the Party's language, and by

the distance it has put between itself and Russia. But other factors—the collapse of the Union of the Left and the CP's continued political monolithism—appear to belie such developments.

To discuss the question one must push beyond the conventional meaning of words. When the French CP “abandons” the dictatorship of the proletariat, some people approve its taking this “democratic” step, while others criticize it for having thereby abandoned Marxism. Yet, it is evident that the French CP never has supported the dictatorship of the proletariat; what it has supported is the dictatorship of the French Communist party. To proclaim that one is abandoning something one has never in fact sought simply perpetuates a hoax. Nonetheless, the change in the Party’s formulation of that hoax is significant: it is the Party’s way of signaling that it has renounced its objective of holding exclusive power.

To see whether this means anything different from the Stalinists’ usual protestations about their love of democracy, whether it is deceptive propaganda or a tactical switch, one must analyze the real nature of the French CP. In the 50-odd volumes of Lenin’s *Complete Works*, at least one statement remains true: “In politics, only fools take others at their word.”

Similarly, the political “line” proclaimed by the French CP does not faithfully translate its true political objective. That political objective is not necessarily “conscious,” and even less is it “rational.” What the French CP says it aims at; what it believes it is aiming at; what it actually does aim at; and what it would do or what it would be led to do were it to come to power—these questions are posed on different, though related, levels.

The Totalitarian Apparatus

Fundamental to the French CP is its organization and bureaucratic apparatus. This apparatus is not identical with the aggregate of individuals who comprise it. The apparatus has its own level of existence as an ensemble of relationships and rules that ensure its self-perpetuation. As in all modern bureaucracies, one finds here a fundamental structural phenomenon that reflects the difference between formal and real processes. The French CP’s

“statutes” do not govern its existence; indeed, they rarely express and most often camouflage the relationships and rules actually in control.

The apparatus of the French CP is not merely a bureaucratic apparatus such as one finds in the state, the army, the church, or in a modern business enterprise. It is a totalitarian apparatus, defined by its objective: the total domination of society through the exercise of government power. Upon coming to power, the Party’s apparatus is not bound by any system of rights or law: law is what the apparatus decides and what it does. (“The cadres decide everything,” Stalin used to say.) Furthermore, the power of the apparatus is not limited by any restraints in the social body; for the apparatus, society is simply a malleable raw material. Its power is not limited by any boundary between a “public sphere” and a “private sphere,” nor does it recognize sectors of activity that in principle would lie outside its power. The power of the apparatus cannot be limited by any “ideas” that would oppose or even challenge its dominance. The apparatus must make its ideology a state ideology; any other is, accordingly, treason.

This is the ultimate goal the apparatus strives to achieve. It is an ideal that never can be achieved, for total power is strictly visionary. Apart from this, many factors cause the apparatus to deviate in varying ways from its ideal goal of totalitarian domination. During the last 20 years, only one nation has come near to achieving that ideal—Maoist China. (Numerous French “leftist” intellectuals were wildly enthusiastic about Maoist totalitarianism at the time of the “Cultural Revolution.” Their feelings have changed; their thinking has not.) However, a state ideology need not be total. Its essential domain, where it can tolerate absolutely no dissent, is in the area of policy, of social organization and objectives. Its natural tendency is to invade all other domains; yet, the examples of Italian fascism or certain East European countries today show that this tendency need not be fully realized, provided

the fundamental postulate remains undisputed—that the “truth” about society and politics must be determined by the apparatus. Thus, one sees how totalitarianism does not necessarily imply that knowledge must be identical with the possession of power, much less need power rely on rational knowledge. Hitler did not claim that he or the Nazi party knew everything; he claimed to know what the German people needed.

The goal of the apparatus—the totalitarian domination of society—is not merely external. Its objective is not only what holds the apparatus together and keeps it in motion; it is manifest in its very being, inscribed in its life and daily functions; it is constantly nourished by the external and internal activities of the organization. Even before assuming power, a totalitarian party—Communist, Nazi, or other—is already a totalitarian micro-society in the context of a global society that has not yet become totalitarian. Within itself, such a party has already established the kind of social relations and values it will strive to impose upon the whole of society when it comes to power.

The unlimited power of the apparatus over the organization is evidence that essentially this power is subject to no rules; although rules exist on paper, they are purely pro forma; the leadership can impose its decisions equally well on the basis of these rules or in defiance of them. The leadership is subject to no rules in the nomination of its members; tenure is not determined by any regular method; the leadership perpetuates itself by co-optation. (In another type of bureaucratic apparatus—for example, a Socialist party or a Western-style government or a large business—the rules that limit the leadership’s power are very real. There is the sociological chance, in Max Weber’s sense of the term, that rules can be made to prevail against the will of the existing authority.)

It does not follow that in the Party bureaucracy the leadership’s mastery is absolute, independent of limits that external and internal “reality” impose on it. The leader-

ship is the “personified” part of the apparatus. The reality of a totalitarian organization lies in its apparatus, but the apparatus can become real only in terms of those individuals who make up the leadership. The leadership is the incarnation of the apparatus—its culmination. Like all other incarnations, this one has its tragic aspects. Between the “personified” leadership and the apparatus, tensions are always possible and can become important. But it is just through these tensions between leadership and apparatus that their basic unity becomes manifest. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, when Mao tried to rouse the people against the dominant faction in the Chinese CP he relied on a fraction of the Party and on the army for support; and although occasionally he attacked the Party apparatus as such, the purpose and the result of his maneuvers were twofold: to renew the domination of the apparatus over Chinese society and, at the same time, to modify the relationship between apparatus and leadership—i.e., himself.

During the most demented period of Stalin’s power, at the very moment when he was sending “devoted cadres” of the Party to their death by the hundreds of thousands, he simultaneously had to reaffirm the power of the Party as such, to proclaim that “the cadres decide everything,” and to invest every local Communist despot with the same type of power in relation to the Party and the people as that which he himself exercised. Stalin could physically destroy three-quarters of the individuals who comprised the apparatus only so long as he preserved the apparatus as such.

Thus, it is clear that the leadership’s unlimited power does not necessarily take the form of the power of a single individual. Of course, the fact that at periods of peak strength modern totalitarianism has been yoked to the power of a single man (Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, etc.) is far from accidental. But a host of contemporary examples shows that it is not absolutely necessary. In any case, the question of whether modern totalitarianism is indissolubly linked to the power of a single

person has been answered by history once and for all: No! Stalin or Mao die; the apparatus endures.

Finally, not only does the relationship between leadership and apparatus include discrepancies between the leadership's policy and the interests of the apparatus, but such discrepancies are, in fact, inevitable; they embody one of the basic irrationalities of a totalitarian bureaucracy. Like Mao's "great leap forward," Stalin's policy again and again led the Russian state and Communist party to the brink of ruin (from which they were rescued only by the similar follies of Hitler). The rationalist observer will always search for a rational explanation of this policy, but it will remain an exercise in rationalization. The apparatus can exist only as the seat of an absolute power, and this power is necessarily invested in one or more persons.

In all these respects, the French Communist party is a totalitarian organization. The French CP may declare that it is the partisan of democracy or pure anarchism or Zen Buddhism, but the structure of its organization and the permanent dominance of its leadership can mean only that its true objective is totalitarian. Accordingly, what the French CP says it is matters little.

Allegedly, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was "abandoned" only after long democratic preparation at the last Party congress; in fact, the issue had not even been brought up at the Congress, and the policy shift was made up on the orders of the Party managers. This provides a comical illustration of the leadership's power: all of a sudden, the Political Bureau has a vision, and within a few hours, oh miracle of democratic unanimity, to a man the Congress shares that vision.

One encounters more of the same in the method of designating Party leaders: co-optation by the leadership; i.e., a few new members chosen by people already on the team. The whole Party organization is put together in such fashion as to ensure that members are trained in obedience to the leadership, thus ensuring its hold on power.

That the brutal methods of earlier days have been softened makes for no basic change. And since one confronts a management that controls everything (funds, press, internal bulletins, cadres, specialists, news releases, etc.), and since deviations continue to be forbidden, the recent so-called free discussion within the Party is nothing more than a safety valve permitting the release of some internal pressure. Were the day to come when "new ideas" would be allowed, and Party managers could be defeated by a vote that was not fixed in advance, the French CP would begin its transformation into a merely bureaucratic party, like the Socialist party. It is still very far from that.

Organization as Ideology

Undeniably, however, for some years the French Communist party has given evidence of some evolution—even if only on the level of its public utterances—and one should consider the causes and meaning of this evolution.

The surprising thing is not that there should eventually be an evolution in the French CP but that there was no such development over so long a period of time, that the Party has been able to remain fossilized for years. The apparatus may try to remain unchanged, but it is immersed in a society—contemporary French society—which has been changing rapidly. How, then, and thanks to what, has the apparatus been able to maintain and perpetuate itself?

To do this, a totalitarian apparatus must be able to ensure adequate recruitment, reproduce its internal structure, preserve its aim of coming to power as a realizable goal, and maintain an ideological cement.

It is a truism to say that these questions present themselves in an entirely different way once the totalitarian apparatus has seized power. For the Russian or Chinese bureaucracy, the question of self-preservation and reproduction coincides with the preservation and reproduction of totalitarian Russian or Chinese society. The power of the state

ensures recruitment, which is only the extension of the dominant class. This power is limited only by the struggle of the people against bureaucratic exploitation, and by the irrationalities inherent in the totalitarian organization itself.

The situation is very different when one comes to ideology. If, while a bureaucracy is coming to and then consolidating power, a "granite ideology" (to use a term of Solzhenitsyn's) is indispensable, the relationship of the bureaucracy to its ideology becomes much more elastic once its power is firmly secured. Of all the instruments at the disposal of the Russian bureaucracy, it is ideology that has become the most time-worn, a burdensome yoke even to the bureaucracy itself. The decomposition process was officially initiated at the 20th Congress of the CPSU and it eventually turned the bureaucratic ideology into an empty husk. It would be possible for the Russian bureaucracy to rid itself almost entirely of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology. The effective power at the bureaucracy's disposal permits it to go far along this road; and this power—the glory and might of the Russian (or the Chinese) Empire—is on the way to becoming the principal ingredient of its "ideology." The long-term effects of the disintegration of the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology are, of course, another matter. In Russia one finds perhaps the first known example of a cynical society. The question of how long a regime can survive in pure and simple cynicism confronts the totalitarian societies far more urgently than those in the West.

For a totalitarian apparatus in "opposition," like the French CP, things work out differently. The real and imaginary interests of individuals constitute a kind of cement for a bureaucracy in power. For an organization in opposition no such cement exists. What does perform this binding function is a combination of ideology and a believable prospect of eventually seizing power. Into this combination people project themselves and their interests, although the latter are generally not decisive.

For the Communist parties this ideology has not consisted only or so much of successive versions of "Marxism." Its hard core has been the reference to two mythical "realities" that one may define as "another place" and "another time." "Another place" was Russia, where "Socialism" was being actualized; "another time" was both time past and time to come: the imaginary "revolutionary" past of the French CP, and the notion that its reactionary policy could be passed off as a mere tactic that the Party would finally redeem by unveiling its true revolutionary essence in the "seizure of power."

In the eyes of its militants, whatever the Party did, it continued to be vaguely "revolutionary" because once upon a time it had been and, when circumstances permitted, would be so again, and because Russia was building "socialism." The first of these rationalizations was a pure act of faith, constantly contradicted by the most immediate, direct experience. (But, then, how many true Christians have ever lost their faith in a God of infinite goodness by considering the world's miseries?) The intrinsic fragility of such wishful thinking was compensated for by obsessive reference to a current mythical "reality" (unverifiable since it was in "another place"), which was the building of socialism in Russia.

For a long time, the hoax of Russian socialism survived the harshest blows that facts could deliver; but now it is beginning to collapse fast. One can observe the cumulative effect of Tito's schism, the 20th Congress, the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary, the break with China, the removal of Khrushchev, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the massive wheat purchases from the United States, the construction in Russia, with American capital, of Pepsi-Cola factories to quench the thirst of "the new man," the dissemination of the truth about the Gulag, "psychiatric" repression, dissidents in the East, etc.

So the French CP can no longer refer to a "finished model" of the socialism it would aim at. Even more, it is now obliged to assert that

no “model of socialism” exists. It can offer its militants neither a definition nor a projection of what it claims it is doing. “Eliminate the power of the monopolies” . . . “nationalize” . . . “plan.” Even when these goals are baptized “democratic,” they seem very puny when compared to the plump old myth of those Russians who, under an inspired Stalin, sang as they built “Socialism”. . . .

Furthermore, what connection do such programs have with socialism, if any? And what would their impact be on people’s daily lives? These questions, no longer conjured away, are being widely debated. The French CP has come to a point where it cannot say in what way its accession to power would be “socialist” in nature—except that it would be, of course, *its* accession to power. In these circumstances, the organization’s ideology tends to become *the organization as ideology*. The whole left is for nationalization, but the French CP wants more. It wants to be “different” or “better.” How can it be better? Because it is the French CP that is demanding it. Party ideology is reduced to the invocation of the Party’s name: “We are Communists because we call ourselves Communists.”

The Preservation of the French CP

Before considering how the French CP’s accession to power might be a realizable goal, let us examine the questions raised by the Party’s astonishing survival over some 30 years. Its influence has been relatively stable (one-fifth of the electorate at large, almost half the labor vote); new members have been recruited in sufficient numbers to make the Party’s presence felt throughout the country; the supply of leaders and cadres has been constantly renewed; the essential elements of its structure have been preserved. Briefly, the persistently archaic characteristics of French capitalism have contributed to the survival of the French CP (France and Italy are the only industrialized nations in which a strong Communist party exists.)

At a given moment—for example in 1945—it happened that the CGT [the Communist-

dominated Confédération Générale du Travail] was *the* mass labor group in France; it faced virtually no competition. Until 1958 and as late as 1962, French capitalism was helplessly mired in the chaos that resulted from the conflict between its accelerated modernization and the survival of superannuated forms of organization. As the major labor group in most business enterprises, the CGT was able to act both as “defender of labor’s demands” and as co-manager in some areas of business administration; it benefited from this double role.

Repeatedly, the CGT forestalled conflicts, or subordinated them to the Party line (during the Cold War, the Algerian War, and in 1968), or arranged shameful compromises. At most, however, its actions created breaches only with individuals or tiny minorities, or disillusioned some workers. Most striking of all, the situation was only slightly altered by the appearance of the CFDT (Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail), for all that the CFDT did offer an alternative. However, the CGT was already there, it was *the* union; ergo, it continued to be *the* union.

In the political sphere, the situation is similar. Until 1958, French capitalism was entangled in problems of modernization; from 1958 to 1968, this program was carried out under the aegis of de Gaulle. Throughout these years, social democracy in France steadily declined. With impunity, the CP shifted from the most sectarian to the most compromising policies—the Cold War, voting special powers to Mollet to wage the Algerian War. (Parenthetically, today, who knows and says that the French CP never effectively opposed that war?) Nonetheless, it was and remains a base of opposition in a country where for a century half of the population has voted left. It has turned to good account several factors that have been traditional in France since 1789—Jacobinism, anticlericalism, “revolutionary” patriotism. It has also benefited from members’ holding public office (there are 28,000 elected Communists in France serving in administrative posts, mainly as town councillors).

Yet, as French society evolves and is modernized, the preservation of the French CP, old-style model, becomes increasingly difficult. Economic expansion and changes in life styles are altering the public's preoccupations. When the Party cries "Wolf!" it elicits only a faint echo. For the same reasons, the human reservoir from which the Party draws its militants has changed. French society produces in shrinking quantities the type of individual prepared to become a militant, for whom politics is a central, life-long activity. Above all, more and more, the younger generations reject the authoritarian relationships of a totalitarian apparatus.

The consequences of May 1968 have weighed heavily on the French CP. On the one hand, society does continue to produce some individuals still adapted to the authoritarian mode (one indication is the relative inflation of Trotskyism and Maoism after May 1968). As an organization, the French CP depends primarily on this element. But it can no longer depend on the great majority of young people. Hence, as far as possible, the Party must adapt, revise its idiom, change its work style, substitute for the simple *Diktat* a more complex manipulation.

The Goal of Power

Finally, the Party apparatus can maintain its momentum only because of its goal of coming to power, and only if that goal seems realizable. In other words, the social historical situation must offer a real chance—not an empty probability—that the ambition of the apparatus indeed can be achieved. So viewed, the CP's existence has been more than "objectively" difficult since it left the government in 1947. That so far it has preserved its influence raises only more urgently the question: How and why can a totalitarian apparatus remain solid, and what appeal can it exert in a society that seems in no way predestined to a totalitarian future? Despite the endemic crisis of French capitalism, from 1947 to 1958 and even later, the CP's accession to power was conceivable only with the military support of

Russia. In other words, it was conceivable only in the context of a worldwide conflict, for then as now it would seem that the United States could not passively accept Europe's passing into the Russian camp.

During the most acute period of the Cold War (1947-53), the French CP was practically converted into a Russian guerrilla detachment, and with the justification that an international crisis was imminent, it indulged in some suicidal operations. The Cold War was followed by a cold peace, which was succeeded by so-called detente. The French CP was forced to backtrack, so that its central task has been to survive while waiting for better times. But because even survival has grown more and more difficult in a changing society, the apparatus has been compelled to modify its line. Since 1968, the modification has been gradual and painful, and is undoubtedly still incomplete. Analogous factors have produced an analogous result in other Communist parties, especially the Italian. Eurocommunism has developed out of the effort of the totalitarian Communist party apparatuses to adapt to a situation in which their accession to power, as prescribed in the classic scenarios, seems to be indefinitely unrealizable and in which, given social changes, they would risk withering away were they to limit themselves simply to struggling to stay alive. Thus they are led to put more and more distance between themselves and Russia, to modify their public behavior and, up to a point, their internal functioning; and finally, to abandon or pretend to abandon—the difference is likely to be slight—their ideological monolithism.

This effort to adapt is strained by inconsistencies, as one sees in the case not only of the French CP but also of the Italian party. But when has inconsistency ever prevented anyone from surviving? Let us rather consider the problems the French CP has faced since signing the Common Program in June 1972, and how it has been affected by the 1978 elections.

The Common Program was signed and the Union of the Left was formed in 1972; a pro-

gressive hardening of the CP in relation to its "allies" commenced in the spring of 1977 and ended with the breakup of the Union in September 1977. It would be silly to try to discuss the Party's line and the modifications thereof as if they had to do with "rational" strategies "rationally" adjusted.

The "rational"—better, the "rationalizable"—component in French CP policy beginning in 1972 can be understood only as a move toward a by no means fresh tactic of seizing power through an alliance with the Socialist party, which at the time was considered too feeble to interfere with the CP's hegemony. The CP emerged from its 25-year isolation, and it felt it could count on two seemingly—and truly—irreconcilable objectives: it could restore credibility to its goal of seizing power; and it could endow its "democratization" with credibility by creating the possibility that when the left in France took over the government, a breakdown in international relations (and perhaps a civil war) could be avoided. If the takeover could be carried out legally and peacefully, the Stalinists could hope to have enough time to augment their penetration of state and industrial management apparatuses, gradually ingesting the Socialists.

The ambiguities of the Common Program, which were apparent from the outset, exploded during the discussions of how to implement it, and the resulting disagreements served as a pretext for dissolving the Union of the Left. Debate had centered not only on the number of enterprises to be nationalized and the fate of subsidiary companies. Much more important were discussions relating to the actual control of these enterprises (which the CP hoped to exercise through the power of the CGT and, above all, those concerning the effective control of the economy, which could be resolved only in terms of the nature of the government.

In the most general sense, these ambiguities resulted from the impracticable nature of the Common Program. The "economic order" it outlined was a construct that could not even be called mythical, for it was incoherent. The

largest capitalist groups were to be nationalized; the others were promised that they would not be nationalized until later, but meanwhile they would be expected to manage their businesses and investments "efficiently." "Rigorous measures" would be taken to "strengthen control of the exchange" while at the same time foreign trade would be permitted to be free. Business would retain "managerial autonomy," but would no longer determine investments and could not dismiss employees. "A substantial private sector" would be allowed to exist and production would be regulated only by capacity and profits—but business would be restrained from making a profit. And so on and so on. What the Common Program set forth was not an economic policy but an economic nightmare.

The enforcement of such measures would create immediate chaos, which would be intensified by the response of working-class elements to a leftist victory at the polls and by panic in capitalist circles. The situation would be further aggravated by measures aimed at augmenting, in various ways, the incomes of large social categories, which a leftist government would have been obliged to put into effect rapidly.

How this situation would evolve would have been determined in a decisive way by the relation of forces (parliamentary and extraparlimentary) within the Union of the Left. The French CP could benefit from the ambiguities of the Common Program and the general confusion that would follow the elections, if it kept political superiority and could prevent independent intervention by the population.

This "line" contained so many contradictions that it is not certain that, even had it been able to preserve its dominance, the French CP would have welcomed victory as an unmixed blessing. In any case, the evolution of French political opinion made this unrealizable. Instead of hegemony or at least electoral parity with the SP, the CP found itself further and further removed from parity. The more the risk of CP domination

within the left seemed to recede, the more were people disposed to vote left. Thus, the decline of the CP's relative influence took on a self-catalytic character.

The CP tried to respond by pretending to de-Stalinize itself, by marking itself off from Russia and even somewhat from its own past. Nothing helped. The more the Stalinists "liberalize" themselves, the more their influence erodes; the more "sincere" they want to be, the less they are believed. That at least the shrewd Stalin understood. The totalitarian lie must be total under penalty of complete ineffectiveness. For having forgotten this elementary truth his bungling heirs have paid with a series of difficulties. But, obviously, one cannot be a Stalin under any and all circumstances.

And so, the French CP harped more and more on "democratization," coolness and independence with respect to Russia, hoping to regain at least part of the terrain yielded to the SP. Disappointed in this hope and with the hour of electoral truth approaching, the French CP (which has repeatedly demonstrated that it is as much concerned about its "programs" as about Lenin's first pair of shoes), became increasingly intransigent toward the SP. Had the SP given in—this was judged to be least likely—the CP, after an eventual electoral victory, would have acquired additional ammunition for moving to power. Given the refusal of the SP to yield, the CP was able to choose the moment for the rupture. But this rupture of the Union of the Left was inevitable from the beginning.

The attempt to adapt the "line" of the French CP to political conditions in France has therefore failed. The "Union of the Left" seemed to be the only possible policy, and it became a trap into which the CP fell. But rupture with the SP is also a trap. There is no "favorable" solution; there are only less unfavorable solutions.

Certainly, electoral defeat of the "Left" damages the Party, but it has survived other defeats. Its position in case of an electoral

victory would have been even more difficult. It would have received the most unpopular ministerial posts in a left government. Any attempts it made to penetrate the state apparatus and the management of the major enterprises would have been opposed, on one level by the SP, on another by the CFDT (Catholic trade unions). Any advantages would have been heavily dissipated by having to support an "austerity" policy that a government of the left would have immediately been forced to adopt. All that would have remained would have been to choose the least favorable moment of splitting, to appear as "defender of the workers," but also as the party responsible for the failure of the "experimental government of the left."

An analogous situation would have existed had the Party remained outside the government. The problem would have been transposed to whether or not the CP should support the government by its votes in parliament. To be sure, not all possibilities for maneuvering would have been shut off. We can count on Marchais and Séguy to be at one and the same time in the government, support strikes against the government, and stifle them should they get out of control. But how long could they have played this game and at what risk?

The French CP preferred a new "historic falling back." This was perhaps its least irrational decision under the circumstances.

As to why the French CP has been able to maintain itself as a totalitarian apparatus, I offer an explanation that the reader may view as academic or dialectical, according to whether he belongs to the French or Chinese cultural tradition. The French CP has remained the same at the same time that it has transformed itself. But into *what* is it transforming itself?

It is transforming itself into a new and hitherto unknown variant of the totalitarian organization. It makes no sense to see in this evolution of the French CP a return to a social democratic type of organization. The French CP is simply not a bureaucratic party like the SP, or the British Labour party, or the

German Social Democratic party. It has not abandoned its essential totalitarian characteristics. The apparatus still dominates the organization, the top leadership still enjoys unlimited power. That one day it will abandon these characteristics is not out of the realm of possibility, and if this should ever happen, we would have ample time to verify it. But maintaining its essentially totalitarian characteristics goes hand-in-hand with changes in its relation to Russia, to international communism, to ideology, to its public attitudes and, up to a point, to its internal functioning. These changes are intelligible insofar as they seem to have been imposed by the evolution of French society and the problems preoccupying the population. There is also the decomposition of its ideology, the crushing weight of its residual allegiance to Russia, and the impasse into which its former political line had led it. Yet, no one can say for sure that had the French CP remained 100 percent Stalinist and pro-Russian its relative loss of influence would not have been greater.

Therefore, a new definition becomes necessary. The French CP is not a "social democratic" party, but neither is it the pure Stalinist totalitarian party it once was. As in the case of the Italian and Spanish CPs, we are witnessing the emergence of a historic novelty: a totalitarian apparatus that can no longer preserve a totalitarian ideology and is forced to modify gradually its totalitarian grip on the organization. How long such an organization can be historically viable is a question to which I do not have the ambition to reply.

But we still have to reflect on the question: What are the chances of totalitarianism in a "developed" contemporary society? Is there in such a society an "objective probability approaching zero" of a totalitarian mutation? The astonishing survival of the French CP will not allow us to brush this question aside.

Contemporary society secretes bureau-

cracy through all its pores. Contemporary society poses its problems in such a way that the only possible answer is a bureaucratic one: "organization," "regulation," "competence," hierarchy, division of tasks, pseudo-"rational" efficiency. And it can survive as a bureaucratic capitalist society only if it imposes this model everywhere, right into the consciousness of individuals. Its supreme victory comes when this model is embraced by those supposedly challenging the system.

But bureaucracy does not signify totalitarianism. The bureaucracy of modern societies is typically a "soft" bureaucracy. Here is another example of the limits of all historic "explication" that would reduce what is coming to what has already been. Totalitarianism cannot be explained away as the conjunction of bureaucracy and revolution. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini were revolutionaries. Nor can an explanation be found in the acute crisis of an established society. More often than not such crises have found other outlets. Stalin imposed and consolidated the Russian CP's totalitarian power independent of any crisis. Totalitarianism, a monstrous historic *creation*, is rooted in a thousand ways in what precedes it, but it also goes in a thousand ways beyond all "logic" and "causality." It is the ultimate fulfillment of the bureaucratization process insofar as the bureaucratic apparatus achieves the maximum of its power.

I noted above that nothing seemed to doom French society to a totalitarian future, that individuals produced by this society more and more reject any and all models of authoritarianism. One may safely conclude from this that the chances of the Communist apparatus seizing power to fulfill its totalitarian mission are practically nil. Nonetheless, there are no guarantees. We cannot exclude incredible upheavals. Totalitarian conquest has generally corresponded to what must be called a sudden and brutal anthropological mutation, a veritable landslide of the terrain increasing with lightning speed and far exceeding all possible explanation and, *a fortiori*, all prevention.

An overwhelming question: What is this deep-rooted fragility incorporated in the psychopolitical personality of Western man, this man formed since 1789 and 1776, and long before in the struggle against dogma, arbitrary power, limitation of freedom and expression of opinion, against national oppression and political, economic, and social injustice? What is it that alters modern society, within the space of 10 or 15 years, let us say from 1918 to 1933, to go far beyond any conceivable "objective necessity" and impresses individuals, by tens of millions, to embrace totalitarian activities, to join Fascist, Nazi, Communist parties, revel in atrocities, to man gigantic concentration camps? Do such phenomena belong to an already vanished epoch?

But how can we forget certain consequences that followed the events of May 1968, the clearest being those on the "organizational" level? Here was a momentous movement that began and deployed itself under the sign of the struggle against authority, bureaucracy, hierarchy. And now, after the retreat of the movement, almost all those who hoped to continue their activity joined explicitly totalitarian movements (Stalinism or Maoism), or moved toward a totalitarian

dynamic (Trotskyism). These young revolutionaries knew nothing else, could think of nothing else—whatever they may have known or thought during the May and June days—than to submit themselves to a fixed dogma incarnated in an organization that they would obey like corpses. And who will say what they would have been capable of doing, had their organization taken power?

Impossible, therefore, to attempt to weigh the totalitarian chances of the French CP apparatus without holding on to the following certainty in the clearest corner of one's mind: In France, with its old civilization, its long and critical tradition, its struggle for democracy, millions of people, subject to no police restraint, have followed the daily monstrosities of *l'Humanité* for 50 years—not simply lies, but fantastic challenges to the simplest common sense. This voluntary acceptance of delirious Stalinist scenarios for half a century by otherwise perfectly normal people, this *alienation* that can only be described as psychotic and that, moreover, annuls both reality and the most elementary habits of reasoning, poses a problem of the first magnitude. A problem as important as Gulag and the power of Stalin or Hitler, if not more so.

Translated from the French by ADRIENNE FOULKE □

The Experiment That Did Not Fail

(That's how Martin Buber characterized the Kibbutz in his *Paths to Utopia*. . .)

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Bogdan Denitch

Eurocommunism and “The Russian Question”

Eurocommunism is not a homogeneous movement, but some common elements do exist. One central problem, which arises both on practical and basic theoretical grounds, lies in the relationships between the Communist parties of Western Europe and the Soviet party, and between the vision of “socialism” advanced by the Western CPs and the Soviet model. This, historically, has been referred to as the “Russian question.”

Whatever the virtues and vices of the West European parties, their organizational independence from the Soviet party is now a fact. But like most “facts” in politics, it has to be thought of in dynamic terms. For the organizational emancipation of these parties has not been paralleled by an equivalent ideological emancipation.

How one analyzes the nature of the Soviet Union ultimately has drastic organizational consequences. If the Soviet Union is *not* a socialist society, and if parties that defended the Soviet and East European societies have erred on so fundamental a question, what is to justify the continued separate existence of Communist parties competing with Socialist and labor parties? If the model of socialism for which these Communist parties claim to be struggling is *sui generis*, that is, unrelated to the Soviet and East European practice,

what then is the difference between such parties and the Socialist parties?

The question becomes more urgent as the West European Communist parties shed some of the practices and phraseology of the past. Abandoning the term “dictatorship of the proletariat,” as the French and Spanish CPs have done, or allowing it to fall into disuse, as have other parties; opening up the party to internal discussion and permitting internal and external criticism, as is more or less the case with most of them—all this creates parties increasingly hard to distinguish from the Socialist parties, or, at least, the left wings of those parties. What remains is a historic tradition, an ambivalent gift, and the notion that the Communists are somewhat more coherent and consistent than the Socialists. The Communist party’s *raison d’être* must be called into question once the so-called Russian question is taken seriously.

The link between the Soviet Union and the West European CPs was always a more complex matter than merely the subordination of the latter to the needs of the former. It did have that function, but it also served an organizationally indispensable role of sanctioning the maintenance of a distinct Communist party in every country regardless of the character or strength of the competing Socialist parties. The tie with the Soviet Union not only linked the CPs with a successful regime in power—no mean asset—but the imprimatur from Moscow, the exclusive “franchise” as the local agent of a

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world revolutionary movement, fortified the various party leaderships against potential internal challenge. At the very least, what happens as a consequence of a break with the Soviets and the insistence that there is no world center of the movement is that the leaderships of the individual parties are now thrown on their own resources. Marchais, Carrillo, and Berlinguer cannot call on the Soviet party to sanction their leadership but must maintain it through their own capabilities and bureaucratic resources. Potential critics operate under far better conditions than when they not only had to attack the local leadership but also face the wrath of Moscow.

In the decade between the Hungarian revolution and the Prague spring, the "Russian question" began to emerge within the parties. A fair summary would be to say that the parties' consensus was that the Soviet Union was a socialist state, one, however, capable of gross errors to be explained either by the cult of personality around Stalin, or by the isolation and backwardness of Russia.

The Prague spring temporarily offered an ideological respite. If Czechoslovakia could produce a "socialism with a human face"—a state that was socialist in its economic character and in which the Communist party retained dominance, but within a system that was democratic and pluralist; if, further, such a development would be tolerated within the Eastern bloc, then one could consider the violations of democracy and socialist norms that had taken place in the previous decades as an early, crude stage of a system that had an internal potential for self-regeneration and could evolve toward a society acceptable to Western Marxists.

This explains both the enormous popularity of the Dubček experiment in the Western parties and the consequent sharp reaction to the Warsaw Pact invasion. The Western parties, almost without exception, broke with the Soviets on that question, and continued their support for the Dubček wing. Breaking with the Soviets on this matter opened a Pandora's box. What kind of "socialism" is it,

indeed, that has to be imposed by force on an advanced working class that had already abolished capitalism? It's no longer a question of "cults of personality" or "mistakes." Rather, the question was urgently posed in the Italian, the British, and the then exiled Spanish party: *What are the structural characteristics of a society that creates such a result?* This meant, willy-nilly, raising the question of the "class character of the Soviet state."

The Western party leaderships developed a holding action following the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The polycentrist line was now taken to its logical conclusion, which stressed the peculiarities of the Soviet and East European states as so exceptional and so basically irrelevant to the Western experience that in the advanced countries there would have to be distinct roads to socialism. The Soviet Union remained some kind of a socialist state, progressive vis-à-vis American imperialism, and playing a generally acceptable role in the Third World with its support of liberation movements. Yet, it was a state whose interests could very well conflict with those of other socialist states, and in no sense a model for the advanced industrial West.

In practice, this view amounted to the notion that between the two colossi the Soviets were the lesser evil. As a consequence, one could discuss the specific problems of those societies without, as yet, making a complex break from Moscow. After all, the Soviets themselves no longer expected the kind of loyalty that was previously taken for granted. They were reluctantly prepared to concede the validity of alternate roads to socialism, although stressing in all of their polemics the universal applicability of their model. They simply granted the possibility that on the road to such a "socialism," different strategies would be appropriate in different countries, while still rejecting the notion of pluralism and "bourgeois democracy." The difficulty the parties in the West faced, however, was that once they

committed themselves to a pluralist vision of a socialist society, it became increasingly difficult to maintain internal monolithicism.

This was an uneasy compromise at best, and it is possible to follow the consequent Communist debate in some detail. Among the most articulate were the British Communists, who organized an intense internal debate and even published a journal called *Socialist Europe: Communist Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*—a journal that explicitly focuses on the nature of the Soviet Union and East European societies.

In other parties, the debate is less organized, but both Italian and French Communists have published, with and without the party's imprimatur, historical works on the Stalin period (e.g., Ellerstein's history) that are radically revisionist. The most formal statement by CP leadership is Santiago Carrillo's *Communism and the State*.

Carrillo defines the Soviet Union as being in an intermediate phase between a capitalist and a "genuine" socialist state, in the same way as the absolute monarchies were an intermediate phase between feudalism and parliamentary democracy. While the analogy is somewhat vague, it asserts the "historically progressive" character of the Soviet Union but denies it the characteristic of a socialist state. At best, Carrillo treats Soviet society as a very primitive development toward what a socialist society should be.

Monty Johnson, a British Communist theorist, comes up with a different theory also likely to provoke horror among Soviet ideologues. His position is that the Soviet Union is a workers' state in which the workers do not rule and where the political bureaucracy plays a role analogous to that of a power elite in a capitalist society. This follows the views of a Polish sociologist, Weselowski, that in capitalist society there is a ruling class that does not govern directly. It is thus possible for the power elite, a much smaller group that makes the state's concrete decisions, to acquire considerable autonomy. Johnson makes the point that there is a bureaucratic stratum that rules in the Soviet

Union and Eastern Europe, but because of the nationalized property relations it still rules in the ultimate interests of the working class. This "interest" is often very imperfectly understood, and gross violations of immediate working-class rights can and do take place. The ruling stratum's definition of working-class interests may be wrong, exceedingly abstract or long-range, and of course is subject to internal power struggles. This view is of course close to the traditional Trotskyist analysis.

The real point of this seemingly abstract debate is that a fatal step has been taken, away from the notion that Soviet society is socialist. This permits a Western Communist party to defend the collectivized property relations, while supporting collective struggles of the working class against the ruling bureaucratic stratum. In the Polish strikes in Gdansk of 1975, this is exactly what happened.

By this point, for some Eurocommunist theorists, the "progressive" or socialist character of the Soviet state is so platonically attenuated that it becomes politically almost irrelevant. Let us recapitulate. Johnson and other British Communists, joined in this by Carrillo and some of the Italian and French theorists, seem to be saying: (1) The Soviet society is vestigially socialist because of its collective property relations. (2) However, this socialist society whose *property relations* represent the "interests" of the working class, is ruled by a bureaucratic leadership that has little or no relationship to the working class itself, and a great deal of subjective autonomy in decision-making. (3) The consequence of this is that the working class does not receive concrete benefits from this society, but, on the contrary, in terms of living standards, working conditions and distribution of power, there is a persistent and growing gap between it and the leadership stratum. (4) Progressive working-class and socialist struggles from below are possible that would be directed against the bureaucratic stratum (class, caste, or whatever). These struggles in turn deserve the political support of Western Communists. Within this framework, it is

necessary to attack violations of freedom of speech, workers' rights, and attacks on individual dissidents as a general policy of defending democratic rights—while holding that in foreign policy, at least compared to the United States, the Soviet Union may pursue a progressive policy.

Following the debates on the Czech events, the Western Communists have stated that they are opposed to the forcible extension of Soviet power, and that they regard it as the duty of Communists to defend the national independence of their own societies. This has permitted such ambivalent developments as the French Communist support for the French nuclear deterrent, and the Italian Communists' statements that it is easier to conceive of development of a "mature socialism" within NATO than out of it. To put it in Marxist terminology, this is arguing that an extension of the power of the bureaucratic leadership of the Soviet Union over parts or the whole of Western Europe would *not* be an advance to socialism. What is left for the West European Communists, therefore, is the notion that the Soviet model might have been appropriate at a certain historical stage for societies as backward as the U.S.S.R., but that in terms of world socialist perspectives, the extension of Soviet "socialism" to the advanced West European societies would be a reactionary step backward.

By evolving as far as they have, the Western Communists now face an increasingly urgent debate on the nature of the Soviet society itself. For this is what is now comes into question: Are not those states and bureaucracies backward or retrogressive, *given the possibilities of those societies*? If the basic task that this bureaucratic "socialism" was to carry out was primitive accumulation and rapid modernization, is it not now an obstacle within societies that are no longer underdeveloped? East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union itself are now advanced societies, relatively highly in-

dustrialized, with a massive proletariat that is excluded from any kind of state or social power.

Today the position of some Eurocommunist theorists begins to approach that of substantial elements within the Socialist parties. After all, the Socialist parties, while opposing the Soviet social and political system, have not developed a theoretical model of what those societies are. As the Western CPs become more enmeshed in coalitions with Socialists and more committed to making structural transformations in their own societies, they may well for a period have a position analogous to that of the Socialist parties—generalized opposition to the Soviet model without a clear analysis of what that model represents.

A point refuting such a solution is the fact that the Communist parties, unlike the Socialist parties, do pay formal attention to ideology. This makes it very difficult for such a party, unless it moves away from Marxism, to develop an agnostic view about societies that call themselves "socialist." A temporary solution is to maintain a generalized critique of the Soviet society, which could permit a number of competing theoretical views to exist within the party. But one point of view seems clearly excluded: the traditional Communist view that the Soviet Union is a socialist society, representing a desirable model for other parties.

Changing realities in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union make likely further critique of those systems based on classical concepts of Marxism. The major change is the development of a massive new working class. This now is a working class whose links with the peasantry have been attenuated or broken, which has produced a second generation of workers for whom the rapid social mobility characteristic of the early years of those systems is irrelevant. For this class, the gap between the prosperous new middle strata and the blue-collar manuals is increasingly visible and intolerable. It is, above all, a class that has repeatedly been told that its demands are legitimate.

The working class of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, no matter how cynical about the ruling parties, exists in societies that base their claim to legitimacy on Marxist ideology. The fundamental "message" remains clear—a socialist society is one characterized by the political, economic, and social hegemony of the proletariat. One does not need agitational pamphlets to draw the contrast between the social reality and the claims of the apologists for those regimes. Therefore, working-class unrest, wildcat strikes, and dissent is systematically endemic, and for the West European Communist

parties that dissent seems far more attractive or tolerable than much of the dissent in the intelligentsia, the oppressed national groups, and the middle class. The Italian, French, and Spanish Communists, as well as the small parties, have, for example, supported the strikers' committees in Poland. Where the intellectual and ethnic dissenters are concerned, the matter is more complicated. But even in those groups there are Marxists dissenters (e.g., Roy Medvedev), so that the CPs in the West can go beyond mere support of the rights of the dissenters and can solidarize themselves with their political program. □

Myth and Reality of National Health Insurance

Here are some excerpts from a piece by Max W. Fine, director of the Committee for National Health Insurance, which appeared in Viewpoint, a quarterly publication of the Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO.

MYTH: Patients will not have freedom of choice, but will be assigned to doctors, thereby depersonalizing the doctor-patient relationship to fit an assembly-line concept of medicine.

REALITY: Under national health insurance, every person will be free to choose his or her own physician. A major problem today is that most doctors are specialists and only 35 percent specialize in primary care (general practitioners, pediatricians, internists, or OB-GYN's).

MYTH: Doctors will be burdened with bureaucratic red tape and with endless forms.

REALITY: National health insurance will relieve doctors of much of their present paper chase. Today, there are over 1,200 health-insuring organizations selling well over 25,000 different types of policies, each with differing benefits and provisions. In addition, Medicare and Medicaid require the completion of claims forms. Under national health insurance, a single claim form will cut down the paperwork burden.

MYTH: We don't need national health insurance; private health insurance is already covering 90 percent of the population and Medicare and Medicaid take care of the rest.

REALITY: According to an Aug. 22, 1978, report from the National Center for Health Statistics, there were 47.4 million Americans (22.7 percent of the population) with no private health insurance in 1975. The Health Insurance Association of America claims 90 percent are covered, but similar coverage claims for the elderly were made by the industry group in opposing Medicare, and they were proved to be overstated.

One-third of the poor—10 million Americans—are excluded from Medicaid. At least 10 million elderly desperately need improvements under Medicare, which currently pays only 38 percent of the total health care costs of the elderly.

MYTH: Government can't administer another big program; bureaucrats can't run the programs they already have.

REALITY: No new federal bureaucracy is proposed under national health insurance. NHI will consolidate a multiplicity of health care programs already run by government (in Canada, for example, administrative costs of NHI in Canada are only 2.3 percent of benefit costs—only one-sixth as great as the 13.8 percent for administrative costs of all private health insurance plans in the U.S.).

MYTH: National health insurance costs too much; we can't afford it.

REALITY: This is the unkindest cut of all. Consider the following facts:

- + Health care is now the nation's third largest industry, costing the American people \$162 billion or \$730 per person last year.

- + Health expenditures account for 88 percent of the gross national product and for many years have been rising much faster than other living costs.

- + With no changes in the present system, health costs are doubling every five years and are projected to increase to \$322.8 billion, or \$3,590 for a family of four, by 1983.

- + Federal expenditures for health care were \$13.6 billion in 1968, are estimated at \$58.7 billion in 1978 and are projected to carren completely out of control to \$89.3 billion in 1983.

The reality is that we can't afford *not* to have national health insurance. Only a properly constructed NHI program provides the leverage to control health-care costs without impairment of quality.

Experts associated with the Committee for NHI Insurance have developed facts and figures to prove that NHI will save Americans billions of dollars each year.

Murray Hausknecht

Metaphors of Life and Death

Discussions of the death penalty have a lot in common with the traditional, tiresome arguments about race. In both instances there is a facade of rationality—some races are demonstrably inferior to others and executions deter homicidal crime. The available evidence on race and achievement clearly contradicts racist assumptions, but since the question of race and intelligence is recurrently raised by “respectable” sources, the ideology of race takes on a veneer of reason. While there is no proof of the deterrent effect of capital punishment, the evidence lends itself to argument. A recent attempt to apply the sophisticated tools of econometrics to the problem concluded that capital punishment does have a deterrent effect. That conclusion was immediately challenged. The mere existence of such solemn and arcane analyses, where the only passion is in defense of technique, lends an air of reason to the proponents of the death penalty.

It is particularly appropriate that the latest controversy appears in the scholarly journals of the economists, since the deterrence argument must ultimately rest on a conception of the murderer as a variant of *homo economicus*. Capital punishment can only deter homicide when a potential murderer has calculated the pains of being caught and convicted against the pleasures of killing. But, as Albert Camus once remarked in a classic essay, the typical murderer rises from his bed in the morning not knowing that by day's end he will have killed someone. The certainty of punishment is a critical influence only when the behavior is highly “professional”; that is, when it is highly rational. Calculation and foresight, though, are spectacularly absent in almost all cases of homicide. People die

as a result of passions aroused by love, fear, and anger; as a result of panic, as in a bungled robbery; from the drunkard's loss of sense and inhibition; or from the irrational maliciousness of some kinds of muggings.

The point, of course, is that it is difficult to muster a reasonable argument for the instrumental functions of capital punishment in the prevention of crime. Camus underscores this by noting that if the death of a murderer is to be used to encourage others to virtue, then logic demands that the execution—the dread fate awaiting the murderer—be a public execution. To see an actual hanging, electrocution, or gassing, would have a more telling effect than merely reading that it took place. Yet even the most vociferous proponents of the death penalty do not call for the televising of executions as a way of deterring crime.

The reluctance to accept the logical implications of the deterrence argument is not as illogical as it seems. Public hangings in England drew enormous crowds (and attendant pick-pockets who could themselves be hanged if caught) that treated the executions as public entertainments. When the death of a person is a source of entertainment, the value of individual life is reduced and the texture of public life immeasurably coarsened. Public execution, the ultimate abuse of body and person, is a form of sadistic pornography, and a society that hides its executions from its own sight recognizes, in effect, the questionable moral consequences of capital punishment.

Although one does not hear it frequently, there is another, stronger argument in which the death of the offender, whether public or hidden, is the critical issue. In this view the social control

function of punishment is trivial or irrelevant. Punishment, to borrow Emile Durkheim's words, affirms the fundamental value that the criminal act has violated "by an authentic act which can consist only in suffering inflicted upon the agent." The position has its difficulties. First, execution for murder is appropriate only when "premeditation" is present, but how is one to define premeditation? Does a drunken quarrel resulting in homicide involve premeditation? Is the panic response of an inept holdup man an act of premeditation? The other difficulty involves the question of whether the death of the murderer is the only "authentic act" that can affirm the value of the sacredness of human life. In any event, the interesting fact is that this moral justification for capital punishment is rarely heard; at best it is an afterthought to the utilitarian argument.

ONE REASON why that argument is the prominent one is that the fundamental issue may not be a concern about crime as such. Here a recent report on the antiabortion movement is instructive. Two Catholic women active in the movement polled other movement Catholics and found, according to the *New York Times*, "that many of those in the movement see abortion at the deepest psychological level, less as a taking of human life than as a practice threatening to existing social patterns and customs in families, marriages and sexual relations." That is to say, the abortion issue symbolizes the painful experience of social change within the private spheres of life. Some of those involved in the antiabortion movement are less concerned with the morality of abortion as such, though this is certainly a central issue for many, than with the difficulties of coping with the problematic effects of changing sexual and family relationships. The ideology of the movement is a symbolic or metaphorical way of expressing fears and anxieties about the consequences of social change for private life.

Similarly, capital punishment is a way of talking about social change and its effects on the public life of the society. Just as the antiabortionists are less concerned with "a taking of human life," so those calling for a return to capital punishment are not primarily concerned with, to quote Durkheim again, "repairing the evil [the murder] inflicted on society." Rather, talk of the death penalty is a means of expressing the fears and anxieties about the decline of public civility.

That concern centers on the high incidence of crime, particularly street crime. When the crime

rate increases the urban stranger is transformed from an object of civil indifference to a menacing figure one cannot afford to ignore, and even one's own neighborhood loses its essential quality of predictability and security. Fear is accompanied by anger at being in a situation in which one is forced to be fearful. There is also a pervasive frustration over the sheer intractability of the problem of street crime; rape and muggings go on, seemingly impervious to human efforts to cope with them. Fear, anger, frustration, and the felt need constantly to attend to strangers heighten the tensions and strains of city life; the loss of civility is experienced as a loss of ease with and satisfactions from urban existence.

BUT HOW one talks about social change and its effects can determine political positions. Metaphors, by their very nature, are freighted with meanings that predispose us to one kind of orientation and action rather than others.

Some metaphors are attractive because there is a good fit between them and a persistent psychological tendency that is especially salient in times of change. There is in all people, argues Peter Marris in *Loss and Change*, a "conservative impulse" that attempts to "preserve the continuity of past and present" in our understanding of the world. Social change is experienced as a disturbance of the familiar and the expected, a loss of orderliness and predictability. When the present is ambiguous, the past is seen as more stable than it ever could have been in reality. On the level of politics, this conservative psychological impulse can be translated into an attempt to return to a golden age or to impose its structure of meanings and actions on the present. The metaphors we use to talk about our present discontents and anxieties link past and present.

The idea of capital punishment is related to the Biblical "an eye for an eye" with its resonance of a world that is part of a balanced, symmetrical, easily understood natural order. In this world crime is a result of sinful people and the larger their number the higher the crime rate. Orderliness is restored to that world by ridding it of sinful people.

The attractiveness of the metaphor depends upon what it ignores. Most obviously, it overlooks the problem of the social conditions that produce sinful individuals. It also avoids confronting the messy and ambiguous relationships among "social conditions," individual behavior, and crime rates; relationships that, at best, are intricate, complex, and difficult to grasp. In other words, to talk of

incivility in these terms merely underlines the instabilities that are at the root of the current discontent.

The metaphor of abortion, too, carries implications of a stable social world that is part of a cosmic natural order. Abortion is a violation or defiance of an inherent biological order in which sex and procreation are inextricably connected. In this order women are childbearers and, therefore, must accept their pregnancies and the resulting responsibilities of child rearing. In short, to be against abortion means to reject the present disorderly world in which there is no "natural" connection between sex and procreation and in which men and women have no fixed, predictable positions in the world. To be in favor of abortion is to embrace an ambiguous and unpredictable world of sex and family relationships, one that is radically discontinuous with the past.

THESE METAPHORS can play hell with the ambitions of liberal politicians. They are particularly vulnerable because liberals are identified with feminists and the underclasses, precisely those who seem to be creating the disorderliness by desiring to change their place in the natural order of things. On the other hand, politicians like New York's Mayor Ed Koch, a former congressman of liberal reputation, can use the metaphor to neutralize the liberal image by displaying their sympathy with those anxious about incivility. (Here, of course, the metaphor connects with racist impulses that run like a dark underground stream through most of the rhetoric about street crime.)

Curiously enough, under some conditions the metaphor may be less useful for conservative candidates. In last year's New York gubernatorial election the Republican, Perry Duryea, made it the centerpiece of his campaign against Hugh Carey who had vetoed a bill restoring capital punishment earlier in the year. When the issue, no matter how prominent its place, is part of a platform containing other issues, the latter can serve as countervailing forces to the attractiveness of the death penalty. In New York Carey received the votes of both proponents and opponents of capital punishment. When, however, the issue can be segregated, as in the California referendum, the lure of returning to a golden age becomes very powerful indeed.

There is a noticeable paradox about the politics

of abortion and capital punishment. Those who favor "the right to life" are usually those who also favor the death penalty. The paradox disappears once we realize that in neither instance is the morality of "a taking of life" the main concern; the fundamental problem is social change and the fears and anxieties it evokes in those caught up in it. Since change is a fact of life we may expect the metaphors to be with us for some time, because they help translate fears into what appears to be a rational politics. □

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Memories of the Vietnam War

Four years after the fall of Saigon, the Vietnam War has become the most important subject in American film. Just why is not clear, but certainly it is a phenomenon that invites suspicion as though, in a period of Jonestown massacres and Gary Gilmore executions, Vietnam was our long-running, all-purpose horror story, the war we could always count on for one more turn of the screw. Yet the closer we look at 1978's Vietnam films, especially the three most successful releases, *Who'll Stop the Rain*, *The Deer Hunter*, and *Coming Home*, the more apparent it becomes that whatever their flaws—and the racism of *The Deer Hunter* is appalling—they have not made the war “show biz” nor turned their main concern, the Vietnam veteran's return home, into an updated version of *The Best Years of Our Lives*. These are films that assume the war's alienating effect on all who participated in it, and what makes them worth considering together is the perspective into which they put that alienation.

The bitterest and at the same time the most traditional of the three films is Karel Reisz's *Who'll Stop the Rain*, an adaptation of Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers*, the story of John Converse, a disillusioned Vietnam correspondent who agrees to smuggle three kilos of heroin back into the United States. The deliberately blurred opening scene of the film, in which what we hear is initially more important than what we see, sets the tone for the events that follow. It begins with a voice calmly calling out bombing coordinates, then suddenly we hear the same voice shout, “You're too close,” and as the bombs go off, we glimpse a trembling John Converse (Michael Moriarty) curled up in a fetal position in a ditch. It is American firepower, not the Vietcong, that has nearly killed him, and for him it is the last straw. He decides to leave Vietnam.

Converse cannot just leave Vietnam, however. The disillusionment he has experienced there has changed him too much for that, and in the next scene we see him writing a letter to his wife in which

he justifies his decision to smuggle heroin back into the country on the grounds that, after what he has just seen, it is the most logical thing to do. In the letter he speaks of the American policy of shooting elephants from planes (on the rationale that they are used by the Vietcong for carrying supplies) and concludes, “In a world where elephants are pursued by flying men, people are just going to want to get high.”

But the separate peace that Converse wants to make is not any more obtainable for him in the 1970s than it was for Hemingway's Nick Adams a half-century earlier. It is harder. The war that Converse is trying to escape is not being run by a naive government hoping to make the world “safe for democracy.” It is being run by a cynical Nixon-Kissinger administration, and when Converse goes to make his heroin deal, it turns out that the controlling party is also government: in this case, a rogue F.B.I. agent named Antheil (Anthony Zerbe). The result is that for the rest of *Who'll Stop the Rain* the Converse we first saw trembling on the ground is more trapped than ever. The dope deal he has become entangled in falls through, and he becomes the hostage of Antheil, who uses him to try to recover his heroin.

It is a passive role that Converse will play until the last minutes of the film. But until that point *Who'll Stop the Rain* belongs to Converse's wife Marge (Tuesday Weld) and his Marine buddy, Ray Hicks (Nick Nolte), to whom Converse has given the heroin so that he can bring it back on his troop ship. It is Ray's conscientiousness and the clumsiness of the two men Antheil has hired to make sure Ray delivers the heroin to Marge that causes all the trouble. When Ray delivers the heroin to Marge, he spots the men, and thinking they are after him (like Converse, he initially has no idea an F.B.I. agent is behind the deal), he takes off with Marge in a frantic attempt to elude his pursuers. It is a flight that leads from Berkeley to Los Angeles to the mountains of New Mexico, and as Ray, in contrast

to the passive Converse, struggles to keep ahead of events, we see that his bid for a separate peace is also doomed. Not only is it possible for a corrupt agent like Antheil to use the vast F.B.I. bureaucracy to track him down, the America Ray is trying to lose himself in is as barren and inhospitable as the Vietnam he has left. Ugliness is everywhere: from Ray's home in the California foothills, which hippies have left strewn with beer bottles and sleeping bags, to the posh suburbs of Los Angeles, where trying heroin is a new form of slumming.

It is not until Ray and Marge get to New Mexico, where Ray once lived as part of a '60s commune, that the ugliness stops. But the stop, the movement back in time, is momentary. The commune is gone, and what remains of it—a giant peace sign painted on the mountain rocks, a house that was also once a monastery—is pure symbol. When Antheil arrives, armed and with Converse in tow, neither the land nor the spirit of the '60s has much power. Ray tries to fight back—significantly with an M-16 rifle he has brought back from Vietnam—but it does no good. He is killed, and although Marge and John are able to get away as a result of his willingness to remain behind, his sacrifice turns out to be sad rather than noble. His bravery does not transform him from Nick Adams to Robert Jordan. Marge and John use their regained freedom to dump the heroin they still have on the ground, but as they drive off to resume their life in Berkeley, we have no sense that they are now ready to live with purpose. For them, dumping the heroin is a matter of dropping a source of trouble. If the separate peace they want cannot be financed with easy money from a dope deal, they will simply take the future on reduced terms. To its credit, *Who'll Stop the Rain* never softens this moment nor suggests that for men like Converse, who have experienced Vietnam, there is energy left for much else.

BY CONTRAST, it is home-town values, not escape, that define Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*. From the very first scene, where the camera follows a tandem diesel as it roars into the steel town of Clairton, Pennsylvania (population 36,500), we are taken into a special world, and from this point until the action switches to Vietnam, we are caught up in the activities of three young steel workers, Michael (Robert De Niro), Nick (Christopher Walken), and Steven (John Savage) in the 24 hours before they leave to join the army. Theirs is not the small-town America of picket fences and corner drug stores, but it is an America that Cimino portrays with

great affection. It is Steven's wedding day, as well as all three men's final day at work. And as we follow them from the steel mill, to the bar they hang out at, to the Russian Orthodox church where Steven is married, to the American Legion Hall, where the wedding reception takes place, to the deer hunt, which climaxes the day, their activities take on the qualities of ritual. What emerges from this meticulously drawn picture is not, however, only a vision of working-class life in a small town but an explanation of why, in Cimino's eyes, so many Americans were willing to enlist for Vietnam. For the America of Michael, Nick, and Steven is a country in which two things count most of all: the bonds that men experience in their day-to-day lives and the sense of accomplishment that comes in meeting a challenge: be it turning out steel, or out-drinking a friend, or killing a deer.

Indeed, had Cimino treated his movie like a novella and stopped at this point, it would have been a perfect small gem: a proletarian version of Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Instead, what happens is that Cimino shifts gears and locales, and we are put in a situation where the rituals of Clairton are tested in Vietnam. It is a transition that makes sense in theory, but as Cimino takes us from a world he has seen in precise, naturalistic terms to a world that has been contrived to provide a moral testing ground, his film loses the authenticity and verisimilitude it began with. The Vietcong that Michael, Steven, and Nick are pitted against are the treacherous orientals of World War II propaganda, and history is transmogrified no less crudely. It is the Vietcong who now commit Mylai-style massacres, and the good Americans are the friends of helpless women and children. After being captured by the Vietcong, Michael and his friends are made to play Russian roulette for their captors' amusement. It is an apparently hopeless situation. The sadistic, grinning Vietcong are heavily armed, and they shoot anyone who refuses to play their game. Yet the miracle of miracles does occur. Cimino's Vietcong are not only monsters, they are stupid as well. When Michael (the best deer hunter in Clairton) asks to play with three bullets in his gun, they naively give them to him, and in a series of maneuvers that would make John Wayne blush, he effects an escape with Nick and a badly wounded Steven.

For Michael, who has previously been accused of being a "control freak" and who has always emphasized killing the deer he was pursuing with one shot, the moment is a triumph: the occasion he

has seemingly been waiting for all his life. When we next see him in Clairton, he is clearly a changed man, but his old confidence is as great as ever. But for Nick and Steven, what has happened when they were captured cannot be absorbed. For Nick the shock is so great that he goes AWOL in Saigon and begins to play Russian roulette on a daily basis; while Steven, who has had to have both his legs amputated, takes refuge in a VA hospital and refuses to see anyone.

At this juncture *The Deer Hunter* again shifts gears, and the gimmickry—although not the symbolism—of the Russian roulette sequences is put aside. Alone, Michael finds that life in Clairton does not have the same appeal, and in the final hunting sequence of the movie, he stalks a deer, then lets it go when he has a clear chance to kill it. For Michael, it is a turning point (certainly the equivalent of Natty Bumppo's growth from deer hunter to trapper), and at the movie's close, it is his tenderness, not the aggressive virility of his pre-Vietnam days, that dominates his life. It is he who brings back Nick's body, after a vain return to Saigon to rescue him, and he is instrumental in getting Steven to leave the VA hospital. The significance of this change is poignantly captured in the movie's final moments, when at breakfast following Nick's funeral, Michael and his friends begin singing "God Bless America." Given Cimino's portrait of America in Vietnam, it is a risky scene that could be interpreted as one more cheer for old-fashioned patriotism. Yet in the singing there is a hesitancy and a hymn-like quality that suggests a very different patriotism from the type that made Michael and the others enlist in the army. The singing is more a plea for God to bless America than it is a statement about an America God has blessed, and although it fails to confront the whys of Nick's death, it does celebrate the kinds of values that are inimical to war: values that emphasize caring and nurture, not the toughness required to make steel or stalk a deer.

NO SUCH POLITICAL AMBIGUITY exists in Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*. It is the one Vietnam film that makes a clean break with past American war films about returning veterans. Luke Martin (John Voight), the paraplegic hero of *Coming Home*, is able to build a new life for himself because he can make use of the anger he has acquired in the war, and in this he is a stunning contrast with his opposite, Marine Captain Bob Hyde (Bruce Dern), with whose wife Sally (Jane Fonda) he falls in love while recovering in a VA hospital.

What makes *Coming Home* so affecting is, however, that the differences between the two men are never simplified so that the movie becomes a contest between the hip (antiwar) vet *versus* the gung-ho (killer) Marine. Although *Coming Home* is structured on a series of contrasts between Luke and Bob, the contrasts are not used to glamorize Luke's sensibility at the expense of Bob. Rather they are used to point out how much the two men have been shaped by the same America and how Bob's loyalty to this America leaves him far worse off than the crippled Luke. It is a pattern of complex counterpoint that is established from the very start when in a series of crosscuts we see Bob (filmed mostly from the waist down) jogging and a group of veterans like Luke talking about the war. What the crosscuts lead to is not the obvious (Bob is healthy; Luke can at most hope to use a wheel chair) but the fact that Luke was once a high-school football hero and that his reasons for having enlisted in the Marines stem from the same sense of self that makes Bob a career soldier. By the middle of *Coming Home*, after Bob has gone to Vietnam and Sally has gotten a job in the hospital where Luke is undergoing physical therapy, the contrasts have reached the point where virtually every discovery that Luke makes is balanced by our sense of Bob's trappedness.

The result is that when Sally begins her love affair with Luke, the affair is as political as it is sexual and is balanced by an understanding—although much less detailed—portrait of Bob. What draws Sally to Luke is seeing him on TV after he has been arrested for chaining himself to the gates of a Marine base as a protest against the war. But at the same time, what has driven Sally away from Bob, whom she has just visited while he was on leave in Hong Kong, are also the pressures of Vietnam. Bob is not a vicious cuckold getting what he deserves. He is a decent career soldier, who made things miserable for Sally while she was in Hong Kong because his own values had been so shattered by the war ("My men were chopping heads off. . . that's what they were into") that all he could think to do was take his anger out on her.

It is a contrast—or, more accurately, a parallel and contrast—that continues after Bob is shipped home with a minor leg wound and *Coming Home* moves to its conclusion. The two men essentially refuse to be rivals. Luke puts no pressure on Sally to leave Bob, who he knows is being torn apart by the war, and Bob in turn acts by the same code of decency that has made him sick over his troops' head-chopping. When he learns of Sally's affair

from the F.B.I., which has been following Luke ever since his arrest, his first act is to let Luke know that he is under surveillance. The upshot is that the climactic scene of *Coming Home*, when Bob tells Sally that he knows she has been sleeping with Luke, turns out to be moving because it goes against the way such confrontations are supposed to end. As Bob, M-16 in hand and clearly out of control, rages, we are sure he is going to kill Sally and then Luke, who comes over to their house wanting to talk things out. But as the scene builds, the rage Bob is feeling (about the war, about his wife, about America in 1968) suddenly vanishes, and he gains control of himself in a way that is just as frightening to see. "I'm fucked," he says, admitting to himself for the first time that everything he believes in has changed beyond recognition.

When we next see Bob and Luke, it is again through a series of crosscuts. The cuts of Bob show him walking along a deserted beach, carefully taking off his dress uniform, then piling his clothes on a lifeguard chair, and slowly and suicidally swimming out to sea. By contrast, the shots of Luke show him in a high-school auditorium, talking to a group of boys who are thinking of joining the Marines, telling them of his Vietnam experiences, and finally breaking down in tears, not out of self-pity but, as he says, out of shame for the killing he has done. What will happen to Bob is clear. Whether Luke will be more persuasive than the Marine recruiter who has spoken before him, we cannot tell. But that is finally not important. It is his sense of the war that in the end dominates *Coming Home* and leaves us with what we have not had before in American film—a war hero unwilling to hide his anger or accept "normalcy," preferring instead the company and politics of antiwar veterans like himself.

IN THIS STANCE Luke resembles no one so closely as Ron Kovic, the author of *Born on the Fourth of July* and a paraplegic vet who, on being asked his profession following his arrest at an anti-Nixon demonstration, observed, "Vietnam veteran against the war." Yet it is important to remember that, while Luke's political consciousness makes him special, it does not turn him into a freak, especially within the framework of American film at the end of the 1970s. While he has done more with his anger than the surviving vets of *Who'll Stop the Rain* and *The Deer Hunter*, it is nonetheless explicable in terms of sights and feelings and frustrations that they too have struggled with. □

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Henry Pachter

Unfair to Marx

MAIN CURRENTS OF MARXISM, by Leszek Kolakowski. Translated from the Polish by P. S. Fall. Three volumes. Volume One: THE FOUNDERS, 434 pp. Volume Two: THE GOLDEN AGE, 542 pp. Volume Three: THE BREAKDOWN, 548 pp. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press. \$60.00

Professor Kolakowski, originally of Warsaw University and now teaching at All Soul's, Oxford, first came to the West's attention in the 1960s as a philosophical spokesman of "revisionism"—the dissident movement of humanist intellectuals inside the Soviet orbit. In his most recent work, he has abandoned that position as futile and now is no longer writing to reform Marxism but to show its absurdity.

To be sure, Kolakowski's concerns had always been different from those of the Zagreb school and other products of the crisis in Marxism. His thought had never been shaped by Marxism as taught in the Communist universities; it germinated in the traditional disciplines of scholasticism. He had never tried to replace the Leninist-Stalinist orthodoxy by a new one that might be furnished with a human face: his aim had been, even then, to make room for free discussion of basic philosophical problems that are older than Marxism and likely to outlast it. His humanism was not hyphenated but identical with free thought. Characteristic, for instance, was his treatment of the philosophy of Mach and Avenarius, whom Lenin had "refuted" in a volume heavier in weight than thought. By contrast, Kolakowski asked what positivism had done to metaphysical rationalism, and he arrived at the "Manichean" answer that Reason is either a cancerous excrescence of a sick species or "an alien body originating in another world."

Even when Kolakowski was using the Marxist vocabulary or seemed to fit modern insights into traditional Marxism, sensitive readers could not

I fail to discern the shadow of St. Augustine behind the body of Marx as painted by Kolakowski. The problems arising from this ambivalence found charming expression in an ironical style that has endeared Kolakowski to Western audiences. The spirit of his philosophy is reflected in the characteristic titles he gave to various essays: "Philosophy of the Striptease," "The Mortality of Reason," "In Praise of Inconsistency," and above all "The Priest and the Jester"—in which, of course, the philosopher appears as a perennial Nay-sayer and the Devil as perpetually doing God's work.

All this set Kolakowski apart from those revisionists who strive for a better or purified Marxian orthodoxy. Yet few among his admirers, who expect only irreverent and unorthodox sallies from this master jester, may have been prepared for the massive frontal assault on Marx and all his followers that fills these three heavy and quite humorless volumes. The jester still seems to condemn the priests, for he treats Marxism as a savior religion and the Marxist ideologists as churchmen. This time, however, he attacks them not because they are theologians but because they preach the wrong theology. At the end of these 1,500 pages he declares: "The self-deification of mankind, to which Marxism gave philosophical expression, has ended in the same way as all such attempts, whether individual or collective: It has revealed itself as the farcical aspect of human bondage."

Before coming to this conclusion, Kolakowski finds "Marx partly to blame for the oversimplified

and vulgarized notions that can be defended by quotations from his works," and he dismisses as "untenable" Marx's principal theories, notably the famous Preface that relates historical change to technological progress and explains all civilization in terms of class struggle:

As a theory of interdependence between technology and property relations [Marxism] is trivial. . . . [As a means of] predicting the future [Marxism's] limitations are even more serious. . . . [As an interpretation of economic phenomena] the theory of value does not meet the normal requirements of a scientific hypothesis. . . . It is not an explanation of how the capitalist economy works but a critique of the dehumanization in a system where everything is for sale. It is part of the romantic attack on a society enslaved by money power.

In sum, Marxism

. . . has been the greatest fantasy of this century; its influence, far from being the result of its scientific character, is almost entirely due to its fantastic, prophetic, and irrational elements.

As to Marx's responsibility for "despotic socialism," Kolakowski's first volume concludes:

If . . . there can be a technique for establishing social unity, then despotism is the only solution . . . the only known technique for the purpose. Unity takes the form of abolishing all institutions of social mediation, including representative democracy and the rule of law. [If] the concept of negative freedom presupposes a society of conflict . . . then there is nothing reprehensible in the idea that the violence which abolishes private property at the same time does away with the need for negative freedom, or freedom *tout court*.

Throughout his three volumes, Kolakowski reiterates that Leninism-Stalinism is, if not the only possible, certainly the only practical and plausible "way to preserve the integrity of Marxism."

II

KOLAKOWSKI EXPOUNDS three different theories here, and they are not quite compatible with each other.

The first states that Marx's specific doctrines do not stand up to scientific scrutiny.

The second, however, states that it is a mistake to interpret Marx as an economist, or a sociologist, or the author of a theory called historical materialism. Such "scientistic" interpretations are due to the misunderstandings of Engels, Kautsky, Plekhanov, and their Bolshevik disciples. The real Marx was a prophet whose messianic message

stirred the totalitarian hopes of the irrational masses. This longing for a savior religion is traced through 80 pages from the neo-Platonists through Christian theogony and mystic philosophy to Hegel. Following Lukács and J. L. Talmon, it is shown that the attempt at a "total" solution leads to the total annihilation of freedom.

Yet, in his third theory Kolakowski admits that Marx was "a romantic," a rebel who fought against the enslaving and degrading practices of capitalistic rationality. This is not quite the same as the quasi-religious utopia of totalitarian technocracy. The one comes from Saint-Simon, the other from the Young Hegelian humanist movement. Despite the enormous interest that this latter strain in the genealogy of Marxism has aroused in the last 30 years, Kolakowski does not pursue this line and dismisses all open-ended, non-totalitarian interpretations of Marxism—from Rosa Luxemburg's theory of spontaneity to his own previous revisionism. He tells us bluntly that it would be better for those who do not wish to draw the totalitarian conclusions to abandon Marxism altogether. Paradoxically, he now agrees with the orthodox Leninists who see the various revisionisms not as developments but as defections from Marxism:

The reformists offered a program of laborious, gradual, and unspectacular improvement. Thus was created the ideological foundation of a new social democracy, the further development of which had very little to do with the history of Marxist doctrine.

Hence, the larger part of the labor movement drops out of the book, and with it such martyrs as Kurt Eisner and Matteotti, such significant writers as Malraux and Silone, such leaders as Daniel deLeon and Eugene Debs, such theorists as G. D. H. Cole. These names are not even mentioned. By contrast, he accredits the physicists Langevin and Joliot-Curie, the biologists H. M. Müller and Haldane, the painters Picasso and Léger, who were fellow travelers at some time but certainly did nothing to develop Marxist doctrine.

Kolakowski's perceptions of the Marxist world seem unduly influenced by the propaganda machine of the Communist party; his view of what constitutes Marxism follows the indoctrination courses of the Leninist school. Thus he faults Rosa Luxemburg for disagreeing with Lenin "on three major points each of which was a precondition for the success of the revolution." Although recent research has confirmed the theory of spontaneity precisely for the Russian Revolution, Kolakowski asserts that Marxism needs "an institutional body

with authority to distinguish truth from error.” This jester indeed betrays too much understanding for the priests.

One may quarrel about the question of what Marx “really meant”; his disciples have developed Marxism by interpreting and reinterpreting the original texts, by amending and applying the doctrine to changing situations and to the progress of science, and by asking new questions in the master’s spirit, often without the support of any text. Hence, a survey like Kolakowski’s raises some important questions. Must we consider Marxism—either in its original or in its more developed form—a closed system, self-contained, and embracing all questions and answers down to the most fundamental problems of human existence? Or, does Marxism leave certain questions open, confining itself to its own limited job, the theory of social change? May individual Marxists think about God, the conditions of human knowledge, or the nature of the universe whatever they like? (The Erfurt Program, written by the very orthodox Kautsky, declared, “Religion is a private concern.”)

The Founders did not foresee the need to underpin their system with a psychology, an ontology, or ethics. But in his second volume, Kolakowski reports on various attempts to marry Marx to Darwin, to Bergson, to the French Encyclopedists, to Kant, or to a particular version of Hegel. And in his third volume, he reviews and assesses similar attempts to combine Marxism with psychoanalysis, existentialism, and structuralism. Only one philosophy seems to resist amalgamation with Marxism: positivism. Like idealistic philosophers, the orthodox Marxists have been unable to respond to it with anything but rancor: most of the positivists, it seems, are Social Democrats, dubbed “shallow” by grand Marxist and metaphysical thinkers, smiled upon because of their lack of dash, their sobriety, their refusal to base action on ideology. But why must Marxism be different from all other isms, remaining incapable of adaptation, and condemning itself to infertility as a totalitarian sect? Why can it not be pragmatic, upholding those of the founders’ doctrines that are still useful, and abandoning others that either did not stand the test of time or no longer answer the questions of a new generation?

On the other hand, Marxism has also served as a starting point for certain philosophers and sociologists who do not accept basic tenets of Marxism such as the concept of class war. The work of Max Weber, to name only the most

striking case, clearly would not be thinkable without decisive suggestions that Weber received from Marx. Much of modern sociology is built on Marx the way Newton’s physics is based on Galileo’s, or as modern biology is based on Darwin: the moderns may be critical of the forerunners, but they must be thankful to them. Thus Marxian insights are a common, though often unacknowledged property of all modern sociology, much the way Freudian psychology has become a premise even for its critics. No modern historian will disregard the economic background of the period he describes; sociology of knowledge and sociology of the arts may use more refined instruments than were at Marx’s disposal, but he was the first to open these fields of investigation. Reversing traditional wisdom, the Marxist Hilferding declared in the preface to his *Finanzkapital* that nothing could prevent capitalists from using his economic insights. Whatever the priests of other cults may say, therefore, Marxism has arrived and has been absorbed by the academic community: one can pass for a sociologist these days by “discovering” that Molière amused the traditional nobles at the expense of the service nobles. And, amusing, many an aperçu used by Marx to illustrate a point in the midst of a polemic has been stretched out into book-length dissertations.

Yet, Marxism is not the sum of a number of theorems discovered by Marx; it is the ideology of a movement that develops both materially and intellectually. Kolakowski takes very little note of this criterium of praxis. Especially in his last volume, the various philosophies of Korsch, Goldmann, Bloch, etc. are treated as purely academic exercises in theology, not in their relation to any movement, social situation, or intellectual development. The only exception to this policy is his attack on Lukács as an ideologist of Stalin, and it proves the rule: for it is Kolakowski’s contention that the Lukács-Stalin version is the only correct interpretation of Marx, and that Stalinist praxis flowed from Marxist ideology.

For those who think that Stalin perverted Marxism it is difficult to follow Kolakowski’s argument. Recognizing Stalin as the true heir of Marx and Lenin, Kolakowski comes close to vindicating his excommunication of Trotsky, and he registers with satisfaction that all attempts to make Marxism more scientific lead their authors away from true Marxism, which still knows its faithful by the criterion of “partisanship.”

In his third volume, Kolakowski shows how this

commitment can be manipulated, and thus Marxism becomes a mere ideology, state philosophy, or official religion, the instrument of a cruel despotism. Strangely, this observation does not alter his view that this perversion of Marx's intentions is orthodox Marxism; he persists in describing Marxism-Leninism as the cause of Stalin's despotism.

III

IT IS ESSENTIAL for Kolakowski's rejection of Marxism that he interpret it as a metaphysical system in search of realization on earth. He expounds this idea brilliantly. I think, however, that he is in error and, at the risk of appearing pedantic, I have to indulge here in a Marxological digression that will lead to the heart of the problem. Kolakowski claims that Marx differed with his utopian forerunners in that *they* "wanted to abolish poverty" whereas *he* started out from "the working class's awareness of dehumanization, not poverty." Whoever has read the paranoid phantasies of Fourier, Cabet's Icarian dreams of a utopian community, or Proudhon's prophecy that "the organization of work will be the demise of bosses and power," and whoever has the slightest notion of those "German Socialists" whom Marx trounced so ruthlessly in *The German Ideology* and in Part Three of *The Communist Manifesto* will wonder where Kolakowski found this startling information.

The pre-Marxian literature of the early 1840s, socialist and conservative alike, is full of complaints about the dehumanization of labor and denunciations of capitalistic rationality; wage labor is frequently called "prostitution"—poets, philosophers, and pamphleteers alike found it "degrading" and "alienated." In the United States, too, Theodore Skidmore, leader of the American Workingmen's party in 1828-31, spoke of the degrading nature of labor in a pamphlet entitled "The Right of Men to Property: A Proposal to Make Them Equal." Henry Thoreau, too, considered the need to earn money "degrading"—a notion, of course, befitting a gentleman. Add to this list the unfortunate Wilhelm Weitling, of whose first work Marx said admiringly: "If these are the toddlers' shoes of the proletariat, wait until it has grown to be a giant"—but whom he then expelled from the League of Communists. Weitling emigrated to the United States, and there he supported the cause of the South in the Civil War. His argument was, characteristically in the spirit of "German socialism," that wage labor was as bad as slave labor. Likewise, the protofascist George

Fitzhugh argued in *Cannibals All: Slaves Without Masters* that free wage labor was so cruel it would be a humane act to provide every wretched worker with a master.

Obviously, Marx would not associate himself with these ideas. He accused the utopians and reactionary ideologists of mistaking a social, economic, and political evil for a moral evil. True, Marx too expected the revolution of the proletariat to overcome the alienation of capitalistic labor, and in early drafts of *Das Kapital* he still referred to this Young Hegelian category. But he already had transposed his critique from the plane of philosophy to the plane of history: "The philosophers have only explained the world in different ways; what matters now is to change it." As his work progressed, the term "estrangement" (*Entfremdung*) tended to lose the anthropological connotations that neo-Marxists have attached to "alienation" (*Entfremdung*; the German language has only one word for both terms). More and more did it take on a very precise economic meaning: the estrangement of the worker from his tools, from his product, from his fellow workers, and from his own body. Eventually, in the final version of *Das Kapital*, Marx abandoned the term altogether—a decision that Kolakowski dismisses as a mere "change of language." But he does not say why he thinks Marx took the trouble of rewriting his work, spent years compiling statistics, and painfully described the production of surplus value, if all he meant to say was that wage labor is "dehumanizing."

All the evidence—including his letters and the reports of private conversations—suggests to me that in his later years Marx understood his achievement to be, as Engels said at his funeral, "the discovery of the law of capitalistic development," which he also exerted was pointing toward the overcoming of bourgeois society. To deny that Marx tried to develop "a political economy of the working class," and hailed the ten-hour day as its first victory (*Das Kapital*, vol. III), is to confine Marxism into an apocalyptic vision of total revolution. Marx did have such a vision in those "early manuscripts," which he never published but which nevertheless are quoted *ad nauseam* to condemn those developments in Marxism that have opened democratic solutions.

Kolakowski consistently underplays these developments, or even reads them out of the company of genuine Marxism. The contributions to the theory of law and democracy made by Renner, Kelsen, Cunow, Jaurès, Paul Lévi, and

others—above all Kautsky, who is everybody's whipping boy—are either not mentioned or not discussed in relation to their practical importance. Important concepts, such as industrial democracy and autogestion, which have a long history from *The Communist Manifesto* to Tito, are mentioned only as an afterthought to the New Left. The classical work of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, which Lenin translated, is not mentioned at all; nor are Hilferding's theory of "political wages," Jaurès's concept of a popular army, or the modern concepts of *Mitbestimmung* and workers' control. We hear more about Otto Bauer's epistemology than we need to know, but nothing about the Linz Program of the Austrian Socialist party, which Bauer wrote. The concept of market socialism is barely alluded to. Many of the great debates that have agitated Marxists over the years—such as the theory of imperialism, the theory of the business cycle, the debate with the Keynesians, that on the nature of facism, that on the nature of the Soviet state—all these do not interest Kolakowski. His main attention is focused on philosophy. Thus we hear all about Lucien Goldman's esoteric "tragic world view," but nothing about *Proletkult* or Brecht's plays.

Kolakowski's professional interest as a philosopher coincides here with the polemical purpose of the book. Only if the wide spectrum of possible Marxisms is narrowed; only if the Marxist methods of analysis are denied recognition in the applied sciences of history, sociology, economics, and anthropology; only if Marxism is narrowed down to a philosophy of despair and salvation—only then can Kolakowski make the point that it must be realized in despotism.

IV

THE IDEOLOGICAL PURPOSE of the book also is responsible for its organization. A subject such as Marxism should be taken up problem by problem; Kolakowski, however, chooses to treat the development of Marxism by discussing authors. Hence the "main currents" are not shown in their historical setting, as interplay between movement and idea, but in the fashion of *Ideengeschichte* (the history of ideas)—as the pure development of theories. This method is inappropriate for the history of any movement, and even more so when applied to analyze "philosophy of praxis," and here yields curious results. An obscure writer, Stanislaw Brzozowski, whose passing flirtation with Marxism left his understanding of Marx "far off the mark" (Kolakowski), is given the same number of

pages as is Karl Kautsky, who was a prolific writer, a remarkable historian, and the most influential interpreter of Marx during the period of the Second International. Industrial democracy, on the other hand, cannot be placed where it belongs historically because the Webbs never said they were Marxists. Each author is given a thorough examination as to hisgnoseological assumptions, no matter how little he contributed to the development of Marxism, but we never are given an analysis of the philosophical situation to which Marxism had to respond at any particular time, nor of the situation within Marxism to which any particular Marxist author was responding. (The late George Lichtheim was a master of this art.) Nor do the authors in Kolakowski's *Main Currents* ever debate with each other.

Worse still, Kolakowski's method leads to a reversal of the relationship between social history and ideology. In this work, he explains the despotism of Stalin as an outcome of Marxist-Leninist ideology—rather than Leninism and Stalinism as a result of the special conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s, or as a consequence of the Czarist system that preceded it. Nor does Kolakowski consider the possibility that Stalinism might have been the ideology of a counterrevolution that for historical reasons had to use the language of the revolution. Modern historians use quite sophisticated techniques to unravel such ideological quirks, but Kolakowski still writes *Ideengeschichte* in 19th-century style. He was able to do that brilliantly and appropriately when he wrote the history of positivism, for in that case the subject was the idea itself, as it developed according to its inner logic from one generation of thinkers to the next. The method is inadequate where the subject is a political movement with many elements shaped by history and reflecting various forces, some of which may still have a close link to the Founder's original idea while others have traveled far away from it. But while it is obvious that Newton, were he to rise today, would think in terms of Einsteinian physics, it is by no means certain whether Marx would approve of Lukács, Marcuse, or Gramsci.

An idea cannot be taken as a static entity. As Hegel pointed out, it usually comes to grief whenever it goes out into the world, is turned into its opposite, and renewed in a different setting. Most often it splits into many heresies and, like the ring in Lessing's parable, "the genuine one probably got lost" while the heirs are wearing cheap replicas. Today we can see parties proudly

carrying Marxist banners while pursuing prudent, reformist policies, and others that never adhered to Marxist theories yet carry out a revolutionary policy. We can see individuals using Marxist tools of analysis and Marxist terminology in works of history, sociology, economics, and anthropology; others will use this same language for purely manipulative purposes, as an ideology or religious doctrine. Moreover, where Marxism is still serving purposes of critical analysis, its techniques and results have so far transcended the framework of Marx's writings, and absorbed so many alien elements, that the claims of a closed system resting on its own philosophical foundations can no longer be maintained.

In view of these developments and of the confusion that affects all talk about Marxism, it might be advisable, precisely for the more serious Marxists, to abandon the lingo of Marxism—although they may remain loyal to some movement that sprang from Marxism and still strives for the general aims of equality, dignity, and democracy. But an attack of the kind that Kolakowski has delivered may have the opposite effect; at least one reader has been provoked to defend Marxism against misrepresentation. To help what Sorel called “the Decomposition of Marxism” a jester might have been more effective than a theologian. □

Lewis Coser

Why Do People Fail to Revolt?

INJUSTICE: THE SOCIAL BASES OF OBEDIENCE AND REVOLT, by Barrington Moore, Jr. White Plains, New York: M.E. Sharpe. xviii and 540 pp. \$17.50.

Barrington Moore has come a long way since he published his monumental study, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, over a decade ago and since he collaborated with Herbert Marcuse and Robert Paul Wolff in 1965 on an unfortunate book in praise of intolerance, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. The revolutionary rhetoric of these works has been replaced by a wry and disillusioned

skepticism in regard to radical politics. Moore's *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery and Upon Certain Proposals to Eliminate Them* (1972) already prepared us for a shift in perspective, but the present work completes the turn from a radical-revolutionary outlook to a humane and tolerant liberal position and, at the same time, a general stance of near despair about the human condition. Moore continues to be passionately attached to the vision of decreasing the causes of human misery, but most of his old certainties are gone. He is now even more tentative than most of us in taking generalized positions regarding the future course of history. He avoids reliance on “inevitable” or “necessary” trends, preferring instead to analyze specific situations in their particularities. Such analysis seems mostly to have reinforced his skepticism about the possibility of beneficial changes in the human lot.

As far as one can see, Moore's shift in perspective largely proceeded from two grounds. First, from a reconsideration of the appalling human costs of revolutionary uprisings in the 20th century and the uncontrovertible evidence that many if not most have, in fact, inaugurated regimes that were at least as unappealing as their predecessors. Second—and this volume deals mainly with this order of ideas—it proceeds from the realization that human beings are generally not moved spontaneously to revolt in the face of appalling human conditions but are disposed, most of the time, to accept their inferior status and continued exploitation. To be sure, Moore argues, there have been historical occasions when people “become very angry and try with passion and forcefulness to do something about their situation.” But even then, that “something” is far from what Marxists expect. Though it is somewhat risky to characterize a huge treatise in terms of a single thread, I am nevertheless inclined to say that the overall theme of the book restates the old wonderment of August Bebel about “the damned wantlessness of the poor.” But while Bebel assumed that increasing class consciousness would in the long run overcome such impediments to radical politics, Moore remains much more tentative. He surveys the literature on concentration camps, the Untouchables of India, and the experiments by Stanley Milgram on obedience to authority. He takes them as conspicuous examples of situations where men and women whom one may have expected to revolt in fact did not and maintained obedience even in the face of most blatant injustice.

A subsequent chapter deals with situations in which oppression and suffering indeed led to

revolt. But the evidence produced here seems to me, alas, rather weak. Moore introduces some evidence that there are certain personality types who can display moral courage even under the most adverse circumstances and who combine the intellectual ability to recognize oppressive conditions with a capacity for moral inventiveness transcending the dictates of existing cultural restraints and traditions. But he says next to nothing about how such heroic individuals can manage to infuse exceptional moral behavior into mass movements.

While the first part of the book is given to deliberately ahistorical considerations about the sense of injustice and its frequent absence, the second, and central, part is a large-scale historical investigation of the German working class in the period from 1848 to 1920. Since it relies mainly on secondary sources and the writing of contemporary German historians, this treatment is not as innovative as corresponding parts of Moore's masterpiece, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. It nevertheless proves to be illuminating.

MOORE CONTENDS, with considerable evidence, that the image of a solidly organized and class-conscious German proletariat in the period before 1914 was largely a myth. This became all too apparent at the outbreak of World War I when "German workers marched off to the carnival of slaughter in perfect order." The German proletariat had been tamed long before. The revolution of 1918 never envisioned the overthrow of capitalism and remained purely reformist in its aims. Only during a fleeting moment, in 1920—when the workers of the Ruhr, the coal miners in particular, reacted to the reactionary Kapp Putsch by creating a Red Army that for a short while controlled the main Ruhr towns—was there a real revolutionary thrust among German workers. The Red Army was soon drowned in blood. Social democracy and its unions, Moore concludes, never succeeded in penetrating most large centers of industrial activity, their main strength being in smaller localities and establishments. They never converted the bulk of German workers to a revolutionary perspective. In 1918 and after, sensing the weariness and lack of revolutionary spirit among the great majority of workers, the Social Democratic leadership soon formed an alliance with the army to make doubly sure that law and order would be preserved. Moore argues not that the Social Democrats betrayed the socialist

revolution, but that their failure to intervene decisively in the affairs of the army and the bureaucracy and to control key sectors of the economy prevented the revolution against the Kaiser from attaining even radical-democratic objectives.

If it is true, as Moore argues, that even in the heartland of Social Democracy the workers were never as strong, well-organized, and motivated by revolutionary ardor as was generally assumed, then it must be true *a fortiori* that the chances for revolution were even lower in other industrial nations. But what of the few cases of successful revolutions in the twentieth century? What of the October Revolution in Russia? Again, Moore is skeptical of received Marxist wisdom. The revolution succeeded, he argues, not because of the organizational or ideological strength of the Bolsheviks, but because of the weakness of the Provisional Government. "If the urban enemies of the revolution had been able to unite and organize themselves, they might have defeated or crushed the revolution in the cities," though they would still have had to deal with the peasant revolution. "It is the state of the army, of competing armies, not of the working class, that has determined the fate of twentieth-century revolutions."

The last part of the book centers on one arresting line of thought that Moore calls "the expropriation of moral outrage." He argues, in a self-conscious analogy to the Marxian notion of the expropriation of the means of production, that in modern capitalist as well as in state-socialist societies, moral outrage has been expropriated and exploited by the men of power, by the Nazis, by the Stalinists, and by "leaders of the free world" as well. Nowadays, visceral anger is more difficult to express on the public scene than was the case a few generations ago, partly because it seems so obviously futile. "Instead, opinion leaders of various stripes turn the moral current on and off as best they can."

The book ends on a note that could have been penned by Max Weber but surely not by Moore's previous guide, Karl Marx: "So far in human history, forms of authority have simply succeeded each other; new ones have substituted quite effectively for those that have become historically obsolete. Whether there will be some qualitative leap into a very different future is an issue that an empirical inquiry like this can safely set aside."

THIS BOOK REPRESENTS a transparently honest attempt of a major scholar to rethink his previous

orientations and premises. It casts a cold eye on much of the Marxist and revolutionary thought that had informed his previous thinking. It is a moving book. Yet one feels that Moore is now seized by excessive despair. The moral and political world, one might suggest to him, is never a world of stark contrasts between black and white, between virtue and vice; it is for the most part composed of various shades of gray. If so, one is permitted to hope, even expect, that as long as democratic processes prevail, there is still a chance for incremental changes in the direction of a more just society, even though complete justice will forever remain an asymptote, that is, a straight line that is always approached yet never reached by the curve of history. □

Elaine Spitz

Equality: Clarity and Confusion

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, by Morton White. New York: Oxford University Press. 299 pp. \$15.95.

THE PURSUIT OF EQUALITY IN AMERICAN HISTORY, by J. R. Pole. Berkeley: University of California Press. 380 pp. \$14.95.

Every attempt to apply equality in everyday life produces paradoxes. Equality of opportunity assures inequality of result; equality of condition restricts equality of opportunity. Separate facilities make black and white schoolchildren unequal, but only separate facilities provide equality for children in wheelchairs. One-man, one-vote weighs individuals equally, yet counts minority groups unequally. And so on, and on.

Can a writer on equality make sense of all this? Can he talk of equality, or must he deal with particular and diverse equalities? Can anyone construct an intelligible account of equality in American history? Morton White, a philosopher at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, and J. R. Pole, a Cambridge University historian, think

they can speak sensibly on the subject. The former does so, superbly; the latter does not.

WHITE CONNECTS the concept of equality to fundamental beliefs about the nature of man and the nature of knowing. He takes the famous phrases of the Declaration of Independence—"we hold these truths to be self-evident"—"all men are created equal"—"with certain unalienable Rights"—and lays bare their epistemological and ethical components, so that we can see them as part of a certain way of looking at the world. They fit into a traditional mode of thought where all things are governed by natural laws. White has a sharp tongue and an even sharper mind, and his personal scorn for natural-law philosophy makes for lively reading. Nevertheless, he fairly and lucidly explains how natural-law principles have ineluctably accorded equality a major role in American thought.

"Self-evident," White argues, meant for Jefferson and his contemporaries "intuitive reason." The laws of nature, they thought, are grasped by all members of the human species (a democratic implication), unless a person's natural faculties are corrupted or peculiarly distorted (a possibly aristocratic qualification). The truth accessible to everyone is that God or nature, in creating man, gave him a particular essence, which notably includes the qualities of life and reason. As a human being who possesses life and reason, one has a duty to preserve that life and perfect that reason lest one violate nature or obstruct God's will. Because one has a duty to perform, one necessarily has the right to do whatever that performance requires. Thus duties give rise to rights: the faculty of reason implies a duty to use it, and the duty to use reason implies the right to make choices in conformity with that reason. Every person, therefore, has a natural (self-evident) right to liberty, a right that cannot be alienated without denying one's God-given nature. In this sense all have the same nature, the same duties, and hence the same rights; each person is autonomous; no one is a subject or a ruler but all are equal.

If White's reconstruction of the argument is correct, then the phrase "all men are created equal" means that all have the same right to preserve life and liberty. Equality is the necessary condition for liberty. And since liberty is an unalienable right, and the purpose of government (according to the Declaration) is the protection of unalienable rights, equality is always a major concern of any legitimate authority.

In this argument, equality entails independence. It refers to the uniqueness of individuals, not their sameness. It means equal freedom to choose in the light of one's own reason, in accord with one's essence, without truckling to others. Equality is an aspect of free action, of freedom from coercion—whether that coercion is exercised by England over its colonies, a church over its flock, or a master over his slaves. The steps required to maintain independence obviously vary with circumstances, sometimes dictating identical treatment for all, at other times calling for policies that discriminate.

What does this idea of equality tell us about the distribution of material goods, in particular about property? According to White, property rights cannot be put on the same pedestal as the self-evident unalienable rights of life and liberty. Unalienable rights arise directly from God's constitution of man; property rights emerge instead from some human act or agreement. Although people "naturally" (i.e., without the benefit of civil society) develop "adventitious" arrangements such as the private ownership of material goods, these arrangements do not yield equal benefits or exact equal burdens. Hence, any obligation stemming from them would follow only from some free (voluntary) action performed as part of the agreement. But if man's will, not God's, makes property rights, man's will can also unmake them. Unlike unalienable rights, which are immutable moral powers no man ought to transfer to government or anyone else, property rights are justifiably changeable and transferable.

This is why Jefferson carefully distinguished property rights from natural rights received directly from God. But less fastidious writers in the natural-law tradition have sought to gain for property rights the unassailable position occupied by life and liberty. On White's showing, however, natural-law philosophy can in principle accommodate both capitalist and socialist property arrangements. If White is correct about the early American position, then a clear and obligatory natural-law distributive standard enters the picture only when, in Rousseau's words, some people have so much they can buy others, and some have so little they are forced to sell themselves. People must be sufficiently equal in wealth to be able to maintain their moral independence.

By placing equality in an appropriate philosophic framework and linking it to an established intellectual tradition, White provides a coherent understanding of the concept. He offers a plausible, though—as the diverse political implications of "self-evident" and property attest—

not unproblematic way of looking at equality in American history.

POLE'S BOOK merits attention here only because it underscores the dangers of misperceiving equality. He notes that people have used the word in disparate ways, that particular equalities often come into conflict, and that equality seemingly varies with circumstances, so that, for example, we are required to be color-blind one moment and free to practice discrimination the next. But these diverse facts scarcely warrant his conclusion that equality is no more than an infinitely complex, obscure, and contradictory idea. Rather, they invite the reflective mind to seek the principle of unity that binds them together. Occasionally Pole seems to try to formulate such a principle, but he only succeeds in compounding his—and our—perplexities. Equality, he suggests, means identity or "interchangeability." But when he deals with the masses of immigrants who resisted homogenization and strengthened the practice of cultural pluralism instead, he terms their achievement a victory for egalitarianism. If equality means "interchangeability," how can cultural distinctions promote equality? He also speaks of the "implicit" [?] unity of egalitarian theory" constantly breaking against the implacable needs of capitalist ideology, e.g., individualism. But when he deals with turn-of-the-century Populists who invoked individualism to combat capitalist concentrations of power and succeeded in securing the enactment of antitrust legislation, he offers no explanation for this at least partial denial of his thesis.

The upshot of Pole's theoretical confusions is the promotion of the mischievous idea that equality lacks defensible meaning and definable boundaries. By leaving equality a vacuous concept, he opens the door to all sorts of spurious claims, while jeopardizing just claims and depriving them of their otherwise commanding moral appeal.

Bertrand Russell once wrote: "To understand an age or a nation, we must understand its philosophy, and to understand its philosophy we must ourselves be in some degree philosophers." As a philosopher, Morton White recognizes that to understand equality one must locate it within a general moral system that establishes the purpose equality ought to serve; his success in this effort significantly clarifies our ideas. As a historian, Pole marshalls a huge array of data about American egalitarianism; but his philosophic deficiencies dangerously muddle our understanding of equality and its role in American life. □

Emanuel Geltman

What Every Unionist Should Know

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS FOR UNION MEMBERS: A GUIDE TO INTERNAL UNION DEMOCRACY, by H.W. Benson. New York: Association for Union Democracy. Illustrated. 256 pp. Paper, \$4.75.

This is a tainted review. For one thing, I've known H. W. Benson for many years; we have long been colleagues in the same movements and causes. Benson is, to put it plainly, a "nut" about democracy who had the imagination and persistence to do something about it in a specific way. A skilled machinist and formerly an auto worker in Detroit, he now is executive director of the Association for Union Democracy. Some 20 years ago, with a few meager contributions from friends, well-wishers, and some unionists who needed help, he launched a small periodical, *Union Democracy in Action*, which was later replaced by the *Union Democracy Review*. In these pages, Benson has exposed corruption, especially as it deprived union members of their rights, investigated the behavior and responsibilities of the Labor Department and the National Labor Relations Board, and generally irritated union autocrats. Most of all, he has explained what union members could do to organize for democratic reform, especially in forcing uncontaminated elections to choose leaders who are responsive to the rank and file.

This summary of Benson's bona fides has a bearing on the special value of this guide. If I have a complaint, it is that, in his austere concentration on its purpose, Benson has neglected to give an account of his own interventions in insurgent campaigns, say, in the bitter struggle of the New York painters against crooks who were running their union. There is, however, a brief survey of what reformers, union members, and "allies" have encountered (e.g., in the operation of the AFL-CIO Ethics Code, or how different unions have reacted to dissent in their ranks—miners, steel workers, carpenters, auto workers, painters). But the record here is primarily illustrative, yielding to the structure of this detailed handbook, which conveys a lesson: "You Can Win."

The Table of Contents runs to some 20 pages. The generalizations occupy no more than a few

pages in an opening statement on "why you need unions and democracy," and another few pages at the close. All the rest is devoted to the business of facts, laws, and remedies.

A caveat is in order. If you do not believe in unionism, you will have to look for an argument elsewhere. This manual is based on the premise that unions are indispensable, and "if you want union democracy, first you need a union." There follows a distillation of what Benson has learned about the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA), about regulatory agencies, about union constitutions whose generous principles are all too often breached in practice. Intertwined with all this is the nitty-gritty of how union members can protect and extend their rights, the "minutiae" that are the heartbeat of this manual—from how to get and use a mailing list to how to sue, how to organize, how to appeal, how to use the law, and where to look for information and guidance.

In one of the two prefaces (the other is written by Clyde W. Summers, professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania), Victor Reuther writes:

One of the virtues of this book is its recognition of the great contribution of the labor movement toward social enlightenment and democracy. On the other hand, the author calls attention to violations of democracy within the labor movement. And why not? Before we can root out an evil, we must become aware of it. And, unless men and women appreciate the potential of unions for human freedom, they can hardly be inspired to undertake the risk of improving them.

Democratic Rights for Union Members cannot be the last word. As Benson warns, laws and bylaws can be twisted this way and that, reinterpreted for better or worse, rewritten and, perhaps most damaging, simply not be enforced. Government departments and agencies are lax, often hostile or inept, and union bureaucracies can be brutal to the point of murder. In time, this manual may have to be updated as to law and as further experience with reform movements and union leadership, good and bad, adds greater "know-how" and "how-to." For now, it stands as a unique guide that ought to be in the hands of everyone who believes in a strong labor movement as an irreplaceable component of a free society. □

NB: If you cannot find this book in your bookstore, you can order from: The Association for Union Democracy, 215 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003. □

LETTERS

Inquiry

Editors:

I am making a film about John Reed (the author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*) and Louise Bryant (his wife) and I would appreciate contact with anyone who knew either of them.

WARREN BEATTY
Paramount Picture, Corp.
5451 Marathon Street
Hollywood, Ca. 90038 ☐

Thoughts on Skokie

Editors:

The gravamen of the ACLU position in the Skokie case is contained in David Goldberger's assertion that "... the nazis are not the real issue. The Skokie laws are the real issue." As Mr. Goldberger's letter points out, the Skokie ordinances required that anyone wishing to speak, parade, or demonstrate had to (1) convince the village officials that the proposed action would not denigrate others or incite hostility and (2) post an insurance bond of \$350,000. In effect, then, the Skokie ordinances prohibited everyone's free speech, not only that of the American Nazi party.

I have yet to see a rational, rather than emotional, refutation of this argument. Henry Pachter merely ignores it in his "answer" and substitutes a thesis of his own. According to this thesis, in seeking to defend a "form," Mr. Goldberger and the ACLU have neglected "the substance of democracy." Writes Mr. Pachter, "We must defend the substance, not the form of democracy."

If this distinction means anything, it means that such "forms" as the Bill of Rights, federal statutes of every kind, our system of checks and balances, and the Constitution itself are somehow less worthy of defense than what Pachter calls "the substance of democracy." But isn't this precisely the sort of distinction that distinguishes nothing whatsoever? For what, after all, is the substance of democracy if it is not those very things

that constitute its form? And how can these be suspended or abrogated—except when there is a "clear and present danger"—without dealing a serious blow to democracy per se?

Mr. Pachter is really telling us, I am afraid, that no creed obnoxious to the democratic state deserves the protection that the democratic state by virtue of its being a democratic state is presumed to guarantee to all creeds, however obnoxious they happen to be. And this is, I submit, a patent absurdity.

But whether one agrees or disagrees with the ACLU position in this particular instance, Mr. Howe's comment on sectarianism is exemplary. Sectarianism has been the chronic disease of the left in America as well as in Europe. To encourage its pernicious growth within the civil rights movement would indeed be a grievous misfortune to dissenters everywhere. "In the long run," as Mr. Howe writes, "this matter may even be more important than Skokie." I fervently hope that Mr. Pachter and others who have resigned from the ACLU as a result of the Skokie case will eventually come to share Mr. Howe's epiphany.

IRWIN STARK
Hillsdale, N.Y. ☐

Can You Help?

Editors:

In his testament my late husband, Ignazio Silone, bequeathed his archives and correspondence to me. Shortly before his death, he asked me to publish whatever I think important. I have therefore decided, on the basis of the archives—but with a great deal of additional material that I must find elsewhere—to write his biography, as a source book, probably in several annotated volumes.

For this task I shall need the help of all friends, all who knew Silone before I met him (in December 1941), or who knew him since in special circumstances or places other than Rome, and who would kindly let me have such reminiscences. Would anyone owning letters from him who does not mind sending photostat copies (since I must edit and publish this correspondence) please do so—and would anyone possessing or knowing how to find articles by or concerning him kindly send these or contact me.

DARINA SILONE
Casella Postale 7196 Nomentano,
00161 Rome, Italy ☐

Conservatives Not So Strong?

Editors:

The conservative forces have undoubtedly set the tone of current political discourse and determined the immediate national agenda. But, I question how much they actually symbolize the popular mood. The poll data cannot be casually dismissed. It indicates overwhelming support for just about every type of government program and government regulation, even those that obviously require far more appropriations. Few Americans believe that any level of government is spending "too much" on anything except space programs and welfare.

Then, why the overwhelming drive for budget reductions and tax cuts? The polls suggest several answers. During the Proposition 13 campaign in California, more than half the people polled thought that present services would be maintained with a spending cut of 20 percent, almost two-fifths felt they would be maintained even with a 40 percent decline. When asked, "Why Taxes Should Be Cut," 60 percent of a national sample chose the alternative: "The Government Wastes Too Much Money." In addition, as would be expected, over 80 percent felt that the tax burden was too heavy on the "little man" and the "rich get the breaks."

It is therefore possible to agree with one analyst who says that the tax revolt is simply a traditional American ritual, like yelling "kill the ump" at a ball game. It is an easy and obvious response to frustrations. Governments are the most available targets for letting out resentments and, in a relatively democratic society, it seems feasible to do something about its supposed evils and inadequacies. On the other hand, there seems no clearly apparent method for dealing with other powerful institutions in society, such as the large corporations, which are no more favorably viewed by the public. Many accept the casual truism that government agencies are uniquely inefficient and government workers inherently incompetent and lazy. Above all, it seems a direct way of easing the ravages of inflation.

The apostles of budget cutting have a well-gearred apparatus. One can also blame the media, with its superficial reporting, and the Democratic leadership, exemplified by the Carter and Jerry Brown variants of me-tooism, which helps the Jarvises and Kemps set the terms of debate. However, the various constituents of the left have to, as always, examine how much of the fault is in ourselves. Too many have fallen into the trap of propounding government programs as aid for the poor and handicapped, instead of pointing out that they are essential for most of us. Others are concentrating on the wrong issues as the "principled" questions. The emphasis should be on democratization of economic life, the theme that mobilized the Democratic Agenda forces, which, among other things, played such a prominent role in opposition to the Carter administration's agents at the Democratic Midterm convention. Anti-administration strength exhibited at this miniconvention demonstrated

that a large number of political activists have not been taken in. There is evidence that the general populace can be similarly convinced, although the task now seems formidable.

WILLIAM SPINRAD
Glen Cove, New York □

McCarthyism Again

Editors:

Having browsed at extended leisure through the superb anniversary issue, I came late upon Dennis H. Wrong's "Looking Back at McCarthyism." Proving anew that it is negative feelings that stir letters from readers, I was impelled to the typewriter.

Bathing Truman's heightening of the Cold War and launching of the government's loyalty oath in gentle apologia is a legitimate point of view, I suppose, though I always marvel at socialist-liberal veneration of old witchhunt Harry, dropper of two atomic bombs on cities full of people, and initiator of the Korea horror. He is counterposed to the bumbling, indecisive Eisenhower, who took us out of Korea, vetoed the advice to bail out the French at Dienbienphu with atomic weapons, stood up to McCarthy (only when Joe tackled the Army, to be sure), and, upon leaving office, warned the country in vain against the military-industrial complex. And whom did these two appoint to the Supreme Court? Truman's man was Tom Clark. Ike named Warren and Brennan.

One can even merely smile a little at Mr. Wrong's conclusion that there was no American Cold War strategy based on "the menace of international communism," because as a young man in Washington he never heard American policy-makers use such language.

But it is more than one can stomach when he writes of the McCarthy period: "A few thousand people lost their jobs, a few hundred were imprisoned, but nobody except the Rosenbergs lost their lives." Suicides don't lose their lives? Would Mr. Wrong recite his sentence to the Rosenbergs' sons? I don't remember a more cold-eyed sentence in any socialist publication. On the intellectual level it rates about even with the Republican "Nobody drowned at Watergate."

While we are on the Rosenbergs, since Mr. Wrong is convinced they were guilty as charged, I do wish he would ease the burden a little for those of us who think otherwise, by sharing with us the root of *his* certainty when atomic scientist Harold Urey said he found the testimony of the Rosenbergs more believable than that of the Greenglasses, when a Columbia Law Review study failed to find guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, when the *Indianapolis News* review of John Wexley's book said "... raises an awful doubt that perhaps justice wasn't done," when the *Western Political Quarterly*, published by the University of Utah, wrote that unless the Justice Department answered the Wexley book's allegations, "we

must conclude that the Rosenberg case is our Dreyfus case."

Finally, we come inevitably to Alger Hiss. Here we read "... as we learned from Allan Weinstein, he had been eased out of the State Department as a suspected Communist agent long before he came to the attention of HUAC."

It may not be necessary for Mr. Wrong to note that Weinstein's scholarship is under serious attack (Victor Navatny in *The Nation*), but to cite as proof that a man was eased out of the State Department. . . !

It is to retch.

LESTER RODNEY
Torrance, California □

DENNIS H. WRONG Replies:

Mr. Rodney may suffer from reading disability, for he manages to misstate or misconstrue every single statement of mine to which he takes exception. He also airs his own fairly primitive views on a number of subjects that I never even discussed.

1. I made no comparison between Truman and Eisenhower. My sole reference to Eisenhower was to note that he appeased Senator McCarthy during the first two years of the Eisenhower presidency (and, let me add here, also had supported the Senator for reelection in 1952).

2. My observations on the Cold War were limited to its presumptive effects on the treatment of domestic Communists. But to suggest that the Truman administration was concerned with the "menace of international communism" rather than with the realities of Soviet power and its expansion is to obscure what that conflict was (and is) all about. Mr. Rodney needs to be reminded that the Truman administration invited the Soviet Union itself and Eastern European governments dominated by Communists to participate in the Marshall Plan; extended foreign aid to Communist Yugoslavia after 1948; attempted to negotiate a coalition government in China between the Kuomintang and the Communists; maintained after the Communist victory there that American policy toward China ought to be one of, in Acheson's phrase, "waiting until the dust settles"; opposed General MacArthur's wish to extend the Korean War to China and, at least initially, even to North Korea above the 38th parallel; and favored "containment" as opposed to "liberation" in Eastern Europe. The Republican party opposed all these positions and the allegation that the Truman administration had "lost China" by its Far Eastern policies was the primary rationale for McCarthyism, acquiesced in by the 1952 Republican presidential candidate, Eisenhower. This reaction deterred three presidents in the 1960s from ending American involvement in Vietnam out of fear of arousing a similar domestic response, certainly the most fateful consequence of McCarthyism and Republican attacks on the Truman administration in general.

Eisenhower had previously exercised his judgment in men that Mr. Rodney so admires in twice appointing the third of these presidents to the vice-presidency.

3. My statistical summary of the results of the anti-Communist campaign was, as the context made clear, a direct paraphrase of David Cate, so Mr. Rodney's quarrel is with him rather than with me. No doubt Mr. Rodney's stomach will become even queasier at the news that Cate has recently been named the next editor of that British "socialist-liberal" publication the *New Statesman*. Is there, incidentally, a hot-eyed way of reporting statistical conclusions? In defense of Cate, he was comparing the record of the American "anti-Communist purge" with that of the Hitler and Stalin regimes with which it has so often been equated in a certain kind of leftist rhetoric. The persecution of suspected Communists and Watergate were both disgraceful episodes in recent American politics, but a historian cannot avoid adopting a comparative perspective that looks beyond the borders of the United States.

4. All I said about the Rosenbergs was that I had told someone in 1953 that I thought them guilty but deplored the death penalty. For all Mr. Rodney knows, I might have changed my mind after reading the sources he mentions. However, I don't mind telling him that I have not changed my mind despite having read the Schneirs' *Invitation to an Inquest* and the debate it aroused, much more substantial reviews of the case, introducing some new evidence on both sides, than the ancient productions he recalls. Wexley was a Hollywood Communist writer whose long-forgotten book was published in 1955 by a pro-Communist publishing firm at a time when the Communists were exploiting the Rosenberg case in a worldwide campaign to equate the United States with Nazi Germany. Mr. Rodney fails to note that Eisenhower was not "bumbling" or "indecisive" about the Rosenberg case either: he not only refused to commute the death penalty but went so far as to justify it in rejecting the final appeal for clemency.

5. I did not cite Hiss's separation from the State Department as "proof" of Weinstein's accuracy, let alone of the court's verdict against Hiss. I merely noted that Weinstein had now fully reported the circumstances of this separation in face of the widely held belief that no one except Chambers had ever expressed suspicions of Hiss being a Communist agent before HUAC gave Chambers a public forum. I was told of Hiss's separation at the time the case became public by people in the State Department who, as I reported, remained sympathetic to him, seeing him as the victim of past associations in a much earlier and different political climate.

6. Mr. Rodney fails even to get Victor Navasky's name right, nor does he mention Weinstein's crushing rebuttal in the *New Republic* (April 29, 1978), nor the more recent refutations of Navasky and two other critics in the March 1979 issue of *Encounter*. Mr. Navasky has yet to address himself to the issues in contention, which are rather marginal to the main body of Weinstein's evidence. □

Philip Green and Robert A. Dahl

What Is Political Equality?

I: Philip Green

What is political equality? Any simple definition of such a vague concept is unlikely to be more than a slogan. We must begin somewhere, though, and Robert Dahl's recent essay "On Removing Certain Impediments to Democracy in the United States" in the Summer 1978 *Dissent* offers an excellent starting point, for which we should all be grateful.

Professor Dahl is the leading theorist of modern American liberalism, and in his most recent work he has tried mightily to escape from the inhibiting confines of that philosophical stance. As we shall see, the escape is finally unsuccessful. Dahl's conventionally liberal understanding of "political equality" prevents him from breaking decisively with the kind of polity, marked by polarities of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion—all in the name of "representative government"—which he rightfully styles "pseudodemocracy." Yet it is helpful to engage in a critique of his effort, not because he is so far from a useful solution to the problem of achieving democratic equality but rather because he comes so close to it. His failure has its roots in two aspects of modern

liberalism (or its philosophical twin, social democracy): its atomistic individualism, and its concomitant concentration on distribution as the key variable in the search for alternative social formations.

The criterion of "political equality," Dahl writes, is that the "decision rule for determining outcomes must equally take into account the preference of each member of the *demos* as to the outcome. To reject this criterion is to deny the condition of roughly equal qualification, taken all around." To this criterion Dahl adds two further criteria that would satisfy what he calls "the doctrines of procedural democracy." These are the criterion of "effective participation," by which he means that "every member [of the *demos*] must have equal opportunities for expressing preferences," and the criterion of "enlightened understandings," which requires that "each member of the *demos* ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating, in the time available, what his or her preferences are on the matter to be decided." And in a general discussion of what these criteria might imply about the social order, he writes:

If privately owned enterprise can be justified at all, it must be on the grounds of comparative social effectiveness: that is, of all the possible alternatives, this form provided the greatest social advantage with least social disadvantage. The only question we need to ask, then, is whether a privately owned corporation is more effective in achieving our social purposes, *including procedural democracy*, than all the possible alternatives to it. . . . To be sure, none of this implies a direct answer to the question of how a large enterprise should be organized, controlled, or owned. To arrive at a correct answer depends as much on *technical* as on philosophical or ideological judgments, *and perhaps a good deal more*. . . . If we were to take into account only the most obvious possibilities with respect to the internal government of enterprises, external controls, markets, prices, and the locus of ownership together with the rights and obligations of owners, we would quickly arrive at a very large array of theoretically possible combinations. Few of these can be dismissed a priori as unsuitable. . . .

In choosing among the large number of possible combinations available in any particular instance, however, citizens of a country committed to procedural democracy would obviously want to avoid consequences adverse to procedural democracy . . . [a] country committed to procedural democracy must either place effective limits on the extent to which economic resources can be converted into political resources, or else ensure that economic resources are much more equally distributed than they are in the United States at present. . . . At the very least, the question of distribution of wealth and income ought to be high on the agenda of a national politics. . . .

Government ownership is as consistent as private ownership with despotic control of enterprises. The form of control should be treated as a problem that is prior to the question of the form of ownership. . . .

[Emphasis added throughout.]

If we begin where Dahl begins, we must certainly agree that the "condition of roughly equal qualification" is, as Bentham long ago asserted, the *sine qua non* of political equality. But it cannot be political equality, any more than the right to hold a job "is" economic

equality. It is in the pursuit of this distinction that we discover that a "procedural" definition of political democracy is unsatisfactory, and that whatever the "technical" advantages of the privately owned or controlled corporation might turn out to be, the latter can only be the enemy of political equality, not its potential handmaiden.

The right to a job is not economic equality because, by virtue of circumstances most of which are out of our individual control, some of us have financial or physical investment capital, others have realizable skills, and still others only salable labor power. Each of these quite different types of "human capital" provides, on the average, a quantitatively and qualitatively different return. It is important to note the qualitative aspect of class differentiation. Those with capital have greater access to the wellsprings of economic and social life—power over the determination of its contours, in sum—than do those with mere skills, and the latter in turn have more economic power than do wage-laborers.

In this respect "political man" is analogous to "economic man," and the maldistributions of political as well as economic power are therefore secondary to the existence of social classes that set boundaries to one's political existence. In failing to discuss class rather than distribution, Dahl has missed the most crucial point. This failure, a commonplace of liberal theory, renders his definition of "political equality" otiose.

IN THE POLITICAL REALM, capital exists in the form of built-in access to decision-makers. That excess is not uniquely available to members of the capitalist class, but they are its chief possessors. A good many more of us possess realizable political skills: the trained capacity to do research, argue effectively, work with compilations of esoteric materials, write well, etc. But by far the greatest number possess only *voting power*—the "right" of "equal participation." To be fair, Dahl obviously considers a much broader range of factors than mere suffrage as elements of equal citizenship, but in the end his conception of civil rights extends only to those

aspects of citizenship that make possible the kind of "participation" we have learned to expect from representative government: being heard, or unheard, as an individual.

Yet, individual voting power (or the power to engage in any similar form of "participation") is strikingly different from the control of social capital or the possession of an individual skill. The former especially, but the latter also, gives a direct return to the person who has them. By virtue of his ownership or control of capital, the capitalist is sure to have either his individual interests, or his version of society's general interests, attended to with great particularity. By virtue of their ownership of a politically useful skill, the members of the professional or paraprofessional political class also have access to decision-makers, though usually only insofar as their ideas and skills are useful to those with more power than they have themselves. Besides, skilled persons also hold the bulk of political jobs; they fill secondary positions of authority merely by virtue of their skills, and thus develop some degree of political power on that basis.

In sum, for both those classes, though clearly for one much more than the other, the factor-shares model of neoclassical economics works well in the political realm (with hardly any metaphorical component at all). The capitalist gets political profit, the possessor of skill gets the political version of economic rent (as the skills are fairly widespread, the rent is minor by comparison with the profit of the much rarer capitalist). But the factor-shares model works for the average voter, as for the average worker, in a different way.

By far the greatest number of voters possess neither capital nor a particular skill but only their voting power. This power, unlike capital or skill but much like labor power, creates "products" that pass out of our grasp as soon as we have made them. These products are not commodities but rather are office-holders and, as Rousseau argued two centuries ago, the moment we install them is the very moment in which we lose whatever power we had over them. From being a real individual

at the moment of voting, I become part of a hypothetical mass, relevant as a mass to the office-holder's desire for reelection—no more. Nothing about me as a person enters into what might be called the calculus of reelectionability (indeed, if I knew the office-holder as a candidate but on a merely personal basis, then the act of election depersonalizes that very relationship); nothing about me as a person enters into the office-holder's decision-making calculus. Yet, it was my personal act that helped create the office-holder. Rather than belonging to me (to us, the whole class of merely individual voters) and becoming a potential extension of our joint human powers, the office-holder—the voters' "commodity"—is installed by us in a realm that is apart from and even potentially opposed to us.

The vote, of course, can hardly be deemed worthless, for otherwise the struggles to possess it would not be so prolonged and bloody. But the concrete marginal return from that vote diminishes sharply with each additional group. And when all groups finally share in the game of representation they benefit, on the whole, only to the extent of their social positions rather than, as liberal mythology would have it, because of their actual number. To return to the level of metaphor, those who possess nothing but the vote are political wage-earners, and their labor-power does not earn a return equivalent to a capitalist's political investment: yet why should it, since to vote, or even to write a letter to one's "representative," is to "do" virtually nothing by comparison to what the possessors of capital or even of skill can do. The voter's "product" is alienated precisely because voters are not able to engage in the kind of political work necessary to make it their own; and thus, as producers, voters are devalued by those who truly govern.

Yet, this alienation of the voter's commodity from the voter is perfectly compatible with Dahl's seemingly egalitarian decision rule of "procedural democracy." There are two

reasons for the inadequacy of Dahl's procedurally individualist, value-neutral approach to political equality, and the two are closely linked. The first often has been noted by critics of Dahl: there is a class of people who set the authoritative agenda of politics that is different from the class of those who merely "prefer" or "participate." Not that there is a hidden conspiracy of the wealthy to place some issues "on the agenda" rather than others; nor is it even that some people find access to decision-makers more difficult to obtain than do others. Surely, the latter condition always does hold in "pseudodemocracies," and so often also does the former. But in both cases, Dahl could plausibly argue that some individuals (*homo politicus*) simply maintain a higher level of interest than will the mass of the electorate (*homo civicus*)—who can, however, insert themselves into the democratic process whenever they really desire to get together and do so.

Dahl did in fact argue exactly this point in his well-known book *Who Governs?* Indeed, there he seemed tacitly to endorse the crude formulation of his ex-student Nelson Polsby that if, say, poor people fail to vote in large numbers, it must be because they think they have something better to do on election day. He now seems to realize that there is a difficulty in his earlier reasoning, but he still has not perceived the necessity for a structural account of why some people voluntarily become *homo politicus* and others do not. (What corporate leader ever turned down an invitation to a meeting at the White House because he had something better to do that day?) Trying now to be an egalitarian, he proposes the provision of an opportunity for "enlightened understanding" to everyone (for realizing that it is time to become *homo politicus*), almost as though enlightenment were a freely available consumer good. But now, too, he fails to perceive a second and even deeper pitfall of liberal individualist theory.

The problem is that information-gathering entails costs that most people usually do not wish to incur. Two centuries ago, Bentham and Hume made the point unarguably: if

knowledge of their self-interests is what most people pursue, they will never be able to play an "equal" part in the definition and pursuit of general interests.

If governance must wait on the acquisition of an enlightened understanding of their own interests and of the general interest by all, it will never take place. If political institutions can be democratized only by equal and "enlightened" participation through voting—which is what taking into account the preference of each member of the *demos* must surely mean—then we are left with the unavoidable conclusion that democracy disappears every time mass voting does not govern decisions directly, or every time that unenlightened mass voting does, or every time large numbers of people don't bother to vote. That is to say, we are left with the unavoidable conclusion that all of Dahl's definitional egalitarianism is beside the point, for egalitarian democracy cannot exist.

DAHL HIMSELF is really aware of this tendency in his argument, and this becomes plain when we compare this latest work to his earliest theoretical statement about democracy, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. In this work he offered eight characteristics, or conditions, of what he called polyarchal (liberal and pluralist) democracy. These conditions, he said, must exist "in a relatively high degree" for a system to be called polyarchal. Among them are the following:

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- 4. Any member who perceives a set of alternatives, at least one of which he regards as preferable to any of the alternatives presently scheduled, can insert his preferred alternative(s) among those scheduled for voting.
- 5. All individuals possess identical information about the alternatives.
- 6. Alternatives (leaders or policies) with the greatest number of votes displace any alternatives (leaders or policies) with fewer votes.
- 7. The orders of elected officials are executed.
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"Polyarchal democracy" indeed is a strange

conception. If mass voting is the ultimate act of sovereignty then none of these "characteristics" can possibly characterize the polity (except to some extent 6). Dahl himself asserted that the condition he describes in 4 exists "in no organization of which I have any knowledge," and that "much the same remarks apply to the fifth condition."

Having said as much, Dahl went on to present polyarchal democracy as a model to be approximated "as closely as possible." He then offered as examples of democratic polyarchies

certain aspects of the governments of nation states such as the United States, Great Britain, the Dominions (South Africa possibly excepted), the Scandinavian countries, Mexico, Italy, and France; states and provinces, such as the states of this country and the provinces of Canada; numerous cities and towns. . . . [The] number of polyarchies is large [he added, but the] number of egalitarian polyarchies is probably relatively small or perhaps none exist at all.

BUT THESE RULES for egalitarian polyarchy are equivalent to the criteria of "political equality" and "effective participation." To say that the former do not and probably cannot exist is to say the same of the latter.

Dahl's problem—the problem of liberal theory in general—is that an individualistic approach to political equality contradicts the egalitarian ends. If Dahl's earlier statement of the conditions of political equality were to be consistent with the realities of liberal individualism, it would have to be rewritten as follows (and these are of course my own rough formulations). In a polyarchy:

4. Only a relatively few powerful members of the society can insert their preferred alternatives among those scheduled for voting—otherwise voters, being a mass, would overload the voting system with their individual preferences. Those men and women who are either far from the institutional heart of the system, or lack access to the media of mass communication, can

hardly ever affect the choice of alternatives that are to be presented to them.

5. Individuals possess unequal information about alternatives: those for whom voting is the only or chief act of commitment to politics cannot possibly have adequate information about the range of policies, and about the precise options realistically available in each policy area, that are going to be acted on by political leaders. Conversely, those close to the institutions of governance must have superior information about available policy choices.

6. Alternative leaders with the greatest number of votes displace any alternative leaders with lesser numbers of votes. But since they were voted on only as potential leaders, and are the executors of a myriad of policies about which the electorate cannot possibly be closely informed, there is no reason to believe that the detailed policy preferences of the electorate, if one could know what those actually were, will govern their actions.

7. The orders of elected officials are sometimes executed. But rarely are they executed when those officials, whose only mandate is a loosely expressed popular vote, come into conflict with other officials or citizens who have a high stake in a specific policy and the resources to back up their preferences.

In other words, in striving to equate the impact of *individual* acts of political preference, we really *eschew rather than approach* political equality—to produce precisely "pseudodemocracy."

All the above reformulations, in the end, are only an updated version of Gaetano Mosca's insight that an unorganized mass can never control a cohesive elite. We do not need to accept Mosca's further assertion that any society must always be divided into a mass and an elite. But it would be absurd to deny that—where the political structures of a society incorporate a voting mass on the one hand, and a relatively separated elite of decision-makers and those persons with

whom they directly interact on the other hand—Mosca’s denial of the possibility of democratic equality must hold good. Polyarchy as a system of competing elites with slightly different preferences on certain issues can and does exist; polyarchy that approaches the realization of Dahl’s conditions “in a relatively high degree” is a contradiction in terms.

To repeat, if institutions can be democratized only by the vote they cannot be democratized, inasmuch as preferences can never enter the decision-making system through the mechanism of voting. The extreme Rousseauian individualism of Dahl’s formulation about political equality, which makes it so attractive at first glance, is precisely its irremediable flaw. In any social unit larger than the commune, to prescribe that “the decision rule for determining outcomes must equally take into account the preference of each member” is to prescribe total chaos. A decision-making system based on that rule can only work if the rule itself is not really observed—if the system is pseudodemocratic rather than democratic. Dahl’s critique of pseudodemocracy is certainly one of the most trenchant ever produced from within the liberal tradition—but by setting up impossible standards the critique turns on itself and ends in an implicit denial of the possibility of real political equality, even if that is not what Dahl intends.

The approach to political equality via conventional liberalism—an approach that by its nature, as it turns out, can only fail to attain its object—leaves us with a critical insight: whatever political equality is, it cannot be something that is obtained by maximizing individual choices. The equality referred to must exist among groups, or communities, to which people belong by virtue of their work, or place of residence, or any other fundamental way in which they define their lives. Above all else then, prescriptions for political equality must be aimed not at minimizing inequalities among

individuals but at minimizing inequalities among *classes*. Only then might the inhabitants of such communities have truly common interests that can be represented to the outside world without every single individual necessarily possessing an equally “enlightened understanding” of those interests; and only then might communities be represented by persons who don’t have fundamentally divergent interests from theirs.

Here, too, Dahl’s formulation is finally unsatisfactory. It is certainly a long and useful step from the traditional recommendations of liberalism to his endorsement of some aspects of democratic socialism: yet, a lingering value-neutrality with respect to economic organization (“few of these can be dismissed *a priori* as unsuitable”) and an unrealistic concentration on “redistribution” undercut its potential impact. To begin with, when we think about democratic political economy with class relations rather than distribution in mind, we see that one “theoretically possible combination” with respect to the governance of enterprises can and indeed must be ruled out *tout court*—despite the “technical” advantages it might occasionally demonstrate. *The existence of any large-scale productive enterprise supplying social necessities*, which is operated according to rules formulated independently of the people who work in it, live around it, or otherwise rely on it in any decisive way, is incompatible with political equality.

The multiple qualifications in the italicized phrase are essential, not incidental. The philosophy of political equality is not a philosophy requiring absolute equality in the realm of income, or the abolition of money or of the division of labor in the workplace. It does require the abolition of particular kinds of class division, but only insofar as they have political implications. A brief review of some inequalities that do *not* have political implications will highlight the areas in which drastic change is necessary, and those areas in which it is not necessary, in order to achieve political equality.

- First, the small, owner-operated firm (or

retail establishment), which employs casual local labor, does not create cumulative inequalities unless such firms form part of a more complex system of dual labor markets. Under corporate capitalism the dual labor market is a restrictive device. Collusion between job- and income-protective labor unions and profit- or stability-maximizing managements tends to exclude those who are defined as "nonproductive" workers from both the organized core industries and the skilled trades, which on the average offer both much greater long-term job stability and much greater pecuniary reward to labor than does the less articulated, more chaotic secondary market.

In the secondary market, some workers make a temporary and genuinely voluntary commitment: college students, would-be artists, etc. But many others are locked into a less rewarding and more isolating job structure through no choice of their own. Except for some bleak Soviet anti-Utopia of gigantic GUM department stores with endless lines of would-be consumers, there will always be a peripheral sector and a secondary labor market—not merely because of consumer pressure, but because there will always be workers and entrepreneurs who prefer the more independent and casual style of the small parochial enterprise. But if they are in the secondary sector involuntarily, then political equality has been denied them, for they are frozen by no choice of their own into a way of life that precludes effective organization and economic pressure (except for small enterprise owners at the small-town level).

The critical condition that alone could make the existence of a dual labor market compatible with the demands of political equality, then, is that the primary labor market be open to anyone who prefers instead a life of organized work in large-scale, high-paying productive enterprises with established democratic relations among workers and managers. Put most simply, small private firms at the periphery of the economy, employing labor according to the hierarchical principles, do not interfere with the search for

political equality as long as job provision, for all who want it, takes precedence over "marginal productivity" at the democratically controlled core.

The same considerations hold, it seems to me, for organizations that are less directly "productive," such as those that provide services. If the public schools of a nation are run in such a way that teachers have no say in their operation, then something like a political class division is created. Society at large must deal solely with a stratum of principals, school superintendents, etc., who have the kind of social power that we associate with ownership or control of the means of production: they control a vital resource. On the other hand, if there are only a handful of preparatory schools run by autocratic headmasters who manage to attract, on a voluntary basis, like-minded (or submissive) staff, no harm is done to the polity at large.

- Second, the existence even of quite large firms under strictly private control is compatible with political equality, if those firms supply society with luxuries rather than necessities. If, for example, we now imagine the present life-style of Americans transposed to a realm of political equality, we might surely be able to say that the existence of a supply of small power-boats at a price low enough to be afforded by the average skilled worker might be a part of the way we then would live, make our lives more enjoyable, and would be intimately and naturally related to the existence of an immense number of glacial lakes and rivers on the North American continent. Luxurious ocean-going yachts, however, will never be a mass-consumer product, and neither their availability nor their nonavailability has the slightest effect on an estimation of the pleasures that are a part of the way we live now. Monopoly in the production of such yachts, therefore, would be completely trivial, and the monopolist who escaped from the strictures of public control would harm no one. Moreover, since this product would be socially irrelevant, he could not possibly

accrue any political power (except in a community of the wealthy, and if any such existed we would surely not worry about the democratization of their public lives). In other words—just as the theory of political equality is indifferent to the quality of truly voluntary relationships among workers and owners, so is it indifferent to the quality of truly voluntary relationships among suppliers and consumers.

• Third, the notion of political equality is also indifferent to the existence of (relative) individual wealth based neither on exploitation of workers nor on extortion from consumers. The Emersonian injunction to reward the builders of better mousetraps appears as a historical accompaniment to the birth of American capitalism, but it does not have to be linked to that kind of inequalitarian social formation. If a people decides, upon serious reflection, that the price of a desired amount of technological advance is the provision of an economic incentive to inventors, it cannot reward them with sole control over the development of “their” technique without also giving them an excess of political power. But if inventors, instead of being rewarded with an exclusive property right that translates into personal or corporate political influence, indeed are rewarded with a lump-sum payment enabling them to retire on the spot to the Riviera, no political harm is done. Moralists of all kinds, and especially socialists who insist upon wearing a Puritan’s hairshirt, might raise objections. But it can’t be said that society is allowing a separate class to develop in its midst, for consumption differences do not cut people off from each other the way classes related to productive work do. The life-styles of consumption classes are more or less like each other; but they are not essentially incompatible.

The same considerations apply, obviously, to those who make their fortune by marketing their personalities or entertainment skills to the public at large. Again, only a (perhaps) defensible, but politically pointless, moralism objects to the special reward that such persons

can gain in capitalist society (or even in contemporary Communist society, though less of that reward takes a monetary form). Certainly, there can be no objection that they are “unproductive”: so was the get-rich-quick inventor of the hula hoop, and he probably provided less pleasure to American society than did Willy Mays. As an aesthetic matter, the existence of riches in the midst of poverty must always be offensive (except to those who are tone-deaf to all considerations of decency). But whereas wealth made in manufactures and resource development or in the provision of such necessities as housing is directly related to, and in some senses causative of, the existence of mass poverty, the wealth of the beautiful individual lies mostly outside the causal nexus of “poverty amidst plenty.”

This discussion of exceptions, then, suggests a rule for any definition of political equality. If people attain their most effective relationship to political life not as “individuals” but rather as the members of communities, then the communities that make up a society must themselves be of roughly equal effectiveness. If that is to be the case, the membership of any *economically* differentiated community must be voluntary, in the sense that the difference is desired by the members of the community, rather than imposed on them willy-nilly.

Of course, there will always be inequality among communities of people, especially to the extent that communities define themselves geographically; for different geographical communities are based on different physical resources, some much more valuable to the world at large than others. To say this is no more than to say that “the state,” that is, some locus for the resolution of conflict, cannot wither away. There will always be accommodations to be reached between the controllers of different resources, and to imagine that accommodations will be reached by means of

the formulation of a set of bargaining rules to be observed by all—rather than by an endless series of ad-hoc fights—is to imagine the existence of public political institutions.

The existence of such a “state” is perfectly compatible with political equality, as long as we understand that political equality does not, cannot, and need not ensure absolutely equal outcomes from all social bargains. After all, the classical theorists were correct in arguing that, under ideal conditions, “free trade” will secure the real exchange of equivalents among communities with different resource bases. Although the usefulness of this metaphor, within or among self-defined national communities, is presently limited by the existence of deforming, and man-made, regional imbalances (“uneven development”), it is only in extreme cases of imbalance that the relations among regions would “naturally” be those of dominance and subordination rather than merely quantitative advantages or disadvantages (and a community so resource-poor that even in an egalitarian society it could not strike a decent bargain for itself would simply be deserted). In that sense, indeed, “life is unfair”: but it is not necessarily oppressive.

Yet, the existence of the kind of state with which we are presently familiar (and of which Marx spoke in his few utterances on the subject) is *not at all* compatible with political equality. For our state exists chiefly as a locus for the resolution of conflicts between and within the social classes generated by the institutional structure of capitalism—and those social classes by their nature, as we have seen, provide political dominance for some, and political exclusion for many others. More: social classes under capitalism are neither regional nor sectional. Each (except for that of the totally excluded) has interests that lead it to aim at dominance. The corporate capitalist class penetrates and dominates the state in order to protect the productive relations of capitalism, and the resultant distribution of power, from attack; the middle class and the working class seek to penetrate the state in turn, in order to protect themselves against corporate capitalism (and

sometimes against each other, too). As a result, the capitalist state *is* necessarily oppressive, since not accommodation but dominance is the purpose of controlling it.

Moreover, the capitalist state is also necessarily undemocratic in a fundamental sense. Except under unusual conditions of social cohesion and primary resource abundance (as in Sweden and Norway), governors who are constrained by the legal relations of capitalism cannot really engage in the planning required to wipe out regional and other disparities caused by uneven capitalist development. Those relations require of the “owner” merely that he make a competitive profit, and if a different kind of behavior would maintain or improve present rates of profit, it would already have been undertaken.

Again, of course, one group of capitalists can make mistakes and be less productive than possible, and other capitalists can help them use the state to improve or relocate their operations—that kind of “planning” (on the French model) is always possible under capitalism. Ultimately, too, simply outrageous behavior in the pursuit of profit, even when the latter is legitimized by all the laws and customs of a society, will cause a dangerous backlash, so that profit-seekers are occasionally disciplined, or warned off before they can go “to far.” But in both these respects the voting mass, again, operates simply as an amorphous, abstract threat, possessing only reactive political power by virtue of its mass existence but hardly any initiatory power at all. The authoritative owners of capital, by contrast, hold society to ransom without ever lifting a finger.

In sum, liberal fury at Charles Wilson for his injudicious remark that “What’s good for General Motors is good for the country” has always had a good deal of self-deception in it, since the injudiciousness of Wilson’s remark is precisely that he was speaking the truth. It is not even conceptually possible to discuss a hypothetical “bankruptcy” of General Motors, for that would be a consequence, not a cause, of the “bankruptcy” of the United States. The U.S. government must pay attention to any

claim made by General Motors' management about the viability of their industry. For in the government's view nothing can be allowed to harm the competitive position of the American auto industry, its ability to provide both mass employment and mass consumption, to enable the government to fend off further balance-of-payment disasters, etc. After serious scrutiny, state officials might find that the corporate managers' claims were actually wrong (that is, not factual), but this would demonstrate merely that the latter had been mistaken, not in what is "good for the country," but in what is "good for General Motors." A different vision of "the corporate good" would be substituted for that of GM's managers, but it would emanate from the same interests: and this is what it really means for a class to have "political" power.

General Motors, furthermore, is defined by the financial and productive capital it commands, and by its organization for producing and distributing—not by the bulk of the human beings who actually work for it. Unlike all but the worst-off regional communities, the members of the economic working class—which, politically, also is a great part of the voting mass—have little to bargain with in the struggle for political power (and the class of truly marginal persons cast aside in the pursuit of individual economic betterment has nothing to bargain with at all, except their bodies and lives). They are largely interchangeable and dispensable. They can threaten to strike, but that is a greater threat to themselves than to the polity at large, and is thus credible only when restricted to a predefined set of situations involving only limited demands.

The main resource of the powerful, by contrast, is that, given capitalist relations of production, they have legal command of "large-scale productive enterprises supplying social necessities," and that the law not only permits them to "operate independently of the people who work for them, live around them, or otherwise rely on them in any decisive way," but actually supports that independence, against attempts to penetrate it, with the armed might of the state. Therefore, a class of

people who, as Marx said, contribute nothing to actual production (except to satisfy the legal requirement that there be a private owner) but have formal control of all the proceeds from it, *must* dominate the capitalist state regardless of whether the people who man political offices are from Harvard, Georgia Tech, the local commercial college, or even the executive offices of a labor federation. As long as the production of autos and associated goods is legally under the control of private "owners," nothing can be done about its organization that does not meet with the owners' final approval—else they will take their products or their profits or even their actual plants elsewhere.

Whereas the great historical general strikes of labor have usually been disasters for the working class, the general strike of owners of capital is constantly in the wings, and in some nations, such as Great Britain, government is permanently constituted by the necessity of preventing the export of capital, no matter what political party is in power. To overcome the advantages of entrenched class positions through the mechanisms of either industrial militancy or the vote—through mass mobilization—is, though possible, both painful and time-consuming; and thus a society in which class conveys the advantages of entrenchment to a few is not and cannot be politically egalitarian.

Thus, when Dahl calls for a redistribution of wealth and income ("economic resources"), and then adds that "the form of control should be treated as a problem that is prior to the question of the form of ownership," he still, it seems to me, has not grasped the real problem. Neither redistribution nor "industrial democracy" will take place to any significant extent as long as the present legal relations of corporate capitalism persist. For those legal relations, which legitimize the private ownership and deployment of capital, entail the economic and political division of

labor by classes. In an individualist society the point of corporate ownership and control is to have power, both over the workplace and over the nation. Take away the reward and no one will want to do the job—who would be a “private” or even “public” manager of capital if the only substantial reward were to be hounded by works committees, citizens groups, and so forth? No doubt, the political power of those who control the lifeblood of a nation’s economy can never be eliminated. The crucial question is whether control is in the hands of the few, a separate and ultimately independent class, or is shared among various publics operating when practically necessary through delegates but retaining the legal powers of ownership.

It is of course historically quite true, as Dahl says, that “government ownership is as consistent as private ownership with despotic control of enterprises,” but this is not nearly as true of community or cooperative ownership. In any event, the road to political equality can only lead through some form of democratic public control of the core economy, and that requires the abolition of private ownership at the core. Socialization, of course, would only be the first of many tortuous steps necessary to make sure that the kind of “pseudodemocratic” representation we are presently familiar with in the political sphere does not simply replicate itself in the corporate sphere (as has happened, notoriously, in Great Britain, France, and Italy).

But how essential the first step is we can best see by way of an apparent paradox. In no sphere are the dangers of public control of capital more obvious than with respect to the media—such as television and the press—which provide information on a mass basis. Here more than anywhere, traditional liberalism would properly have us guard against the tyranny of a centralized bureaucracy. Yet, plainly, the monopolistic control of the provision of that information by a handful of rich men makes political equality impossible. The democrat may agonize about *how* to take control of these agglomerations—but not *whether*.

VI finally, we must emphasize one other element in search for a usable definition of political equality. We have seen that communities of choice, rather than idealized but actually powerless individuals, are the only possible building blocks of genuine political equality. We have seen also that any hope of achieving roughly equal bargaining and exchange among such communities requires the abolition of the social class known as “owners of the means of production” (they being defined as those persons who have effective legal control over the core sectors of national or local economies), for owners divert the sources of communal strength to their own class uses, thus favoring some communities, despoiling others, and reducing everywhere the political role of nonowners to a secondary or even nonexistent status.

But there remains yet another class division that Dahl does not discuss at all and that is highlighted by this emphasis on communities. In their interchanges all communities must be represented—be they great or small, watershed areas or city blocks, giant factories or collections of craftspeople—just as *within* such communities individual members will often require representation in dealing with each other. Whatever methods we devise for delegation and rotation in office, the permanent requirement of representation in some manner or other defines the social class division between experts and their clients (which includes the division between representatives and constituents). This is the politicized form of what Marx called the division between mental and physical labor, which obviously carries with it a tremendous potential for freezing in place another form of political inequality. This potential exists when we speak of an elected works manager or a local civil servant as much as it does when we speak of an independent, self-employed professional or a “faceless bureaucrat.”

What distinguishes all members of this class from the traditional working class is that the latter has no means other than the self-denying weapon of the strike of imposing its

will on either employers or employers' customers. The professional salariat, by contrast, makes rules that the rest of us must obey, and quite independently of whether it is overworked or underpaid by some general social standard. Moreover, however "democratic" our intentions, there is nothing even in small-scale human relationships that necessarily conduces to client control over experts, or community control over elected representatives where the representation is itself based on expertise; and there is much that militates against it. As Nicos Poulantzas has remarked about the "neo-technocratic talk of a State which . . . is administered by left experts and controlled simply through the mechanisms of direct democracy," the picture conjured up is one of technocrats

flanked by [self-management commissars]—a prospect which hardly frightens the various specialists, who are even manifesting a sudden passion for self-management because they know that, at the end of the day, the masses will propose and the State will decide.

Obviously, the problem is an immense one (much more troubling, in fact, than the problem allegedly posed by the class division between "owners" and "workers," which is based on an entirely artificial distinction). It is a problem not susceptible to solution by

formula. Still, the previous discussion suggests a possible argument. If political equality is realized through membership in communities, and if the expert-amateur distinction is (often, if not always) real, then experts must be of and by rather than merely "for" communities. All our notions of the training of experts must be turned around. An understanding of the notions of service and representation has to replace the acquisition of technique as the first skill demanded of the professional; and the opportunity for training must be something both desired by individuals and given to them by communities that wish to be represented, rather than being the product of nothing but the drive to advance private interests.

SO WE COME full circle in our escape from the constricting individualism of the liberal version of political equality: abolish the primary social class division and we can begin to attain the equality of communities. Thus communities can begin to regain control of the ways in which their needs are met and participate equally in attenuating the force of the secondary social class division. None of this requires the utopian achievement of an end to the division of labor, or the abolition of careers or professions or (unequal) incomes. But political equality does require that a citizenry find democratic ways of training "experts," installing them in office, overseeing their performance, and removing them; and that it not think of political, professional, or managerial life merely as a series of individual incentives and rewards.

If we are truly locked into the way of life of individualism we will not, of course, give it up in response to moralizing appeals. If we come to see, however, that this way of life is not compatible with real political equality, which is also an ultimate good for millions of people in all the liberal societies, then we will at least be able to confront a basic choice with an understanding of the issues that does not effectively preclude one resolution altogether.

Meanwhile, democrats should not concentrate their efforts (which are bound to be chimerical), on finding ways to increase



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individual participation or enlightenment in Dahl's sense. Rather, we should encourage and, if possible, participate in the kinds of spontaneous community or workplace organizations, with their demands for direct

representation in decision-making, that have been burgeoning all over the world in the past dozen years; and we should support as well public attacks and inroads on corporate power wherever they appear. □

II: Robert A. Dahl

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify some of the questions raised by my article and Philip Green's comments.

1. I am not surprised that Professor Green has misunderstood my description of the democratic process, for the account given in the article is highly condensed and incomplete. In one crucial detail, it is potentially misleading. If a reader as deeply informed on these matters as Professor Green has misunderstood my argument, others may also. I want therefore to add a few words that may help to clarify my account.

My purpose was to provide a description of the democratic process at the limit of possibility. The criteria I offered may be thought of as ideal standards against which to evaluate the performance of an existing process, institution, or regime, and possible alternatives to them. From certain assumptions not set out there, I derived five criteria that a democratic process ought to satisfy:

(i) **EQUALITY** in voting: the rule for determining outcomes at the decisive stage should take into account, and take equally into account, the expressed preferences—the vote—of each citizen.

(ii) **EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION**: throughout the process of making binding decisions, each

citizen should have an adequate opportunity, and an equal opportunity, to express his or her preferences as to the final outcome, including an opportunity to place questions on the agenda.

(iii) **ENLIGHTENED UNDERSTANDING**: in order to express one's preferences accurately, each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating, in the time permitted by the need for a decision, what one's preferences are on the matter to be decided.

(iv) **FINAL CONTROL** of the agenda by the citizens: the citizens ought to have the exclusive opportunity to decide what matters are to be, or are not to be, decided by means of the democratic process.

(v) **INCLUSIVENESS**: the citizen body (the *demos*) ought to include all adults subject to the laws, except transients.

A process satisfying these five criteria would be, in my view, fully democratic. I do not see how anything less could be judged fully democratic, and I do not see how any process could be more democratic. Whether any large group of persons could govern themselves by a process that was *fully* democratic seems to me rather doubtful. Nonetheless, we may judge processes and regimes as relatively more democratic, or less,

according to these criteria. If the democratic process were our sole standard (which I doubt), we could judge a process or regime as better or worse to the extent that it satisfied, or failed to satisfy, the criteria.

Of course, we live in a world of unsatisfactory processes, institutions, and regimes. In my view, some are considerably worse than others. Moreover, we can conceive of very much better processes, institutions, and regimes that may be within our capacities to attain.

Regimes in various countries that we tend to call democratic are, by these criteria, really not very democratic. Yet I do not believe that all regimes are equally undemocratic, nor, I imagine, does Professor Green. Regimes with certain institutional guarantees that provide considerable freedom of expression, fair and frequent elections, a plurality of political parties, toleration of organized oppositions, and so on, seem to me more democratic according to the criteria than regimes that lack these institutional guarantees; they are, to that extent, better. I prefer to call regimes of this kind *polyarchies*. There is a view on the left, represented most clearly by orthodox Leninism, that the political institutions of polyarchies—"bourgeois democracies"—are a contemptible sham, in practice no different in nature or value from openly authoritarian regimes. In my view this has been a tragic misconception. Polyarchies *are* more democratic than authoritarian regimes, and to that extent they are better.

Yet polyarchies are not sufficiently democratic. They all fall far short of the criteria for a democratic process. They ought to be democratized further. How they can be democratized further is a problem to which both Professor Green and I seek solutions.

2. The misleading detail in the account given in *Dissent*¹ has to do with the label I attached to criterion (i). Though I defined it in the same way, instead of "equality in voting" I called it "political equality." One problem in

discussing political ideas, and certainly in any discussion of democracy, is that a very large number of key terms are jam-packed with meanings, ambiguities, and emotions. Political equality is surely one, and I should have foreseen that the term would produce misunderstanding.²

However, the essential point is not the label, after all, but the meaning it is given. The meaning is clear enough: a process ought not to be called democratic unless the vote of each citizen is counted as equal with that of any other citizen. The requirement is hardly original with me. Nevertheless, it appears that Professor Green considered the label rather than the definition, and understood me to mean that equality in the voting is the whole substance of "political equality" in the much broader (and more ambiguous) sense. The matter seems clear enough to me, but if Professor Green was misled then no doubt other readers were also.

Let me now try to erase the last shadow of ambiguity. If I understand Professor Green rightly, he does not believe that individual equality in voting is a necessary condition for democracy—or for "political equality" in the broader sense. I shall come back to his own solution later. Meanwhile, let me state unambiguously that I do indeed believe that individual equality in voting is a *necessary* condition for democracy. But it ought to be perfectly obvious that it cannot be a *sufficient* condition. For many additional conditions are required, including, I believe, the other four criteria for the democratic process.

I am not sure how much of Professor Green's criticism arises from his supposing that I meant to define equality in voting as not merely necessary but sufficient for democracy

¹For those who might be interested, a fuller version has since become available. "Procedural Democracy," in James Fishkin and Peter Laslett, eds., *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*, Fifth Series (1979). Even in this more complete account, however, I excluded several crucial problems that I hope to deal with in the larger work of which it is only a part.

²Unfortunately I continued it in the later article, where, however, the fuller account may help to prevent misreading its meaning.

and for political equality in the broad sense. Evidently that confusion is the source of a good deal of his concern. To that extent his criticism is misconceived.

3. Among the many conditions necessary to the democratic process it is obvious that the socioeconomic order must be of crucial importance. Moreover, the question of the best socioeconomic order lays a claim on our concerns to some extent independent of the question of the democratic process. The universe of important values does not consist only of the values of the democratic process. However, in my article my intentions were limited to the narrower problem: if Americans were to take the values of the democratic process seriously, what obstacles would we need to remove and what alternative arrangements would be better?

Here I think Professor Green misunderstands the argument of the article, as I think he misunderstands what I have written elsewhere. I do not believe that democracy requires capitalism, and never have. Where I may differ from Professor Green is in thinking that the relation between democracy and the socioeconomic order, far from being as clear as orthodox socialists and antisocialists seem to believe, is highly problematical.

For its time, a form of agrarian capitalism based on rather widespread ownership of farms was relatively favorable to democracy in the United States, as it was also in a few other countries such as Norway. But that kind of agrarian capitalism was uncommon. In any case, it was historically ephemeral. The system of corporate capitalism that replaced it is much less favorable to the democratic process, not least because it generates greater inequalities in political resources.

In my view, in a modern economic order that would be more congenial to democracy the economy would have to be seen as essentially public or social, not private. Enterprises would be understood to be social, not private. The economic "surplus" above survival needs that is available for increased

consumption, investment, public goods, and savings would be viewed as a social product, jointly created by a multiplicity of social factors—not merely entrepreneurial or managerial inputs or, for that matter, only labor inputs. In such a society people would take it for granted that economic activity was a matter not of private concern and private control but of public concern and public control.

This view may not be too different from Professor Green's. However, to say that the economy ought to be viewed as public, not private, is not a solution; it is only a beginning. Where Professor Green and I disagree, I expect, is regarding the nature of a desirable solution. For one thing, I believe it has been simplistic and unproductive for advocates of capitalism and socialism to focus so much attention on ownership rather than on control. Unless one is quite clear about questions of control—how decisions are to be made that govern particular enterprises and the larger coordinating functions of the economy—the consequences are likely to be disastrous, not only theoretically but, what is more important, in practice. In considering alternative economic systems, one needs to give high priority to two central questions about control over the economy: *Who* should control decisions about inputs, outputs, prices, allocations, investment, locations, and so on? And *how* can this control actually be exercised? We are unlikely to discover satisfactory answers in the ideologies of the 19th century. At this late stage in the 20th, there is too much concrete experience available to allow ourselves the vague generalities that once might have been acceptable.

To be sure, within the limits of his comments it would be unfair to expect that Professor Green would describe his solution in much detail. It is not unfair, however, to suggest that he should have openly confronted a difficulty with his solution that many readers will find profoundly troublesome and some may regard as lethal to his proposal.

4. Let me now turn to that problem, and to a point on which we flatly disagree. In more than one place, Professor Green rejects the value of political equality among individuals, which he seems to regard as a lamentable legacy of obsolete liberal ideas. His own solution, if I grasp it correctly, is to provide equality not among individual persons but among communities.

Communities of choice [he writes], rather than idealized but actually powerless individuals, are the *only possible* building blocks of *genuine* political equality. [It is therefore only by abolishing] the social class known as "owners of the means of production" [that we have] any hope of achieving *roughly equal* bargaining and exchange among such communities.

Now there happens to be a fundamental dilemma of political life of which Professor Green does not warn us. Without being precise about the exact nature of the relation, we can all readily agree that political equality must be a relation of equality among units of some kind. Suppose we were to define that relation of equality without specifying the units: the units might be individuals or they might be collectivities. Unless it should happen that the collectivities are all equal in the number of persons they contain, the following is obviously true: it is impossible that political equality exists simultaneously among individuals and among communities (or other collectivities). One *necessarily* excludes the other. The reason is self-evident. If Community A consists of 100 citizens and Community B of 1,000; if the two communities are to be politically equal; if their equality includes something like equal power in voting and bargaining; and if their equality in voting and bargaining produces something like equality in exchange or allocations, then at the individual level each citizen in A counts for much more than each citizen in B, and presumably gains more from their transactions.

Hidden in this conception of collective rather than of individual equality is a curious,

rather corporatist notion of justice. In effect, Professor Green tells us that justice does not require equality or equal bargaining power among individual human beings but among collectivities. To put it in another way, equality among collectivities is given priority over equality among individual persons.

As a general principle this is open to so many objections and difficulties that it finally verges on absurdity. To begin with, the fundamental conception of justice that it violates is more than simply liberal. I think that virtually all important views about justice have held that the good of each human being ought to be considered of equal value, and no human being ought to be considered as *intrinsically* more valuable than another. If Professor Green proposes to replace the good of individual human beings in moral reasoning with the good of collectivities, I hope he is prepared to take on quite explicitly the task of showing us why we should accept his principle of justice and reject that of almost all moral reasoning. As it stands his principle seems to be simply arbitrary.

But aside from this philosophical problem, his principle encounters a host of practical difficulties. For one thing, it provides no solution to the problem of the relations that ought to prevail *within* each of his communities. I imagine that he would recoil from the *reductio ad absurdum* of his argument. Would he insist that *within* each political community the "only possible building blocks of political equality" are still smaller communities? Sooner or later we shall have to reach "communities" of one person.

If we try to apply his solution *within* a community, then it looks to be self-contradictory or vacuous. Surely, a process for making binding decisions within one of his communities, if it were to be democratic, would have to satisfy my criteria, not his. And must these criteria not include, among other things, equality in voting?

Again, Professor Green's voluntary communities evidently could vary indefinitely in size. The size of a community would be quite arbitrary. But if the size of the community were arbitrary, would this not make

allocations and distributions arbitrary also? If resources are bargained over, and communities are roughly equal in their bargaining and exchange, as he says, then individuals in the smaller communities would, as we have seen, acquire more resources than individuals in the larger—concretely, I suppose, more per capita for education, medical care, housing, and so on. Is this not a strange principle of distributive justice?

Let me mention one more defect. If the size of a community were not fixed, then the unhappy consequence I just mentioned would tend to produce another. There would be very strong incentives for larger communities to split endlessly into smaller communities. In fact, it is hard to see how the process could ever stabilize or where it would end. It is possible that Professor Green believes that the unseen hand of competition among communities would somehow yield a rational and desirable outcome; but if so he ought to explain how this would come about.

5. Although he is in my view quite wrong in proposing that *as a general principle* political equality among communities ought to override political equality among individuals, he is quite right in saying that democratic ideas and practices are bound to be unsatisfactory unless they provide for communities—to which I would add other kinds of groups and associations as well. (Let me simply use the term associations as a label for these smaller groups within the larger polity—communities, collectivities, subsystems, organizations.)

Since my account of the democratic process did not speak to the question of associations, it is to that extent incomplete, and what is more, defective. To complete the account in a satisfactory way is a task far beyond the limits of an article, and far more complex than may be commonly supposed—as I am only too painfully aware, since it is a task in which I am engaged. Even so, a word or two may help to clarify the main points of agreement and disagreement between Professor Green and myself.

It is a serious defect of democratic ideas that from the Greeks to Rousseau, for the most part they did not allow sufficiently for the presence of associations within the state. In its philosophical origins, democratic theory tended to be strongly monistic: there were individuals and the state but (other than the family) not associations. We have not yet learned theoretically, or in practice, how to deal with the presence of associations, that is, with pluralism. Once one concludes that democracy must allow for associations, then formidable questions arise, as Rousseau clearly understood in his attack on associations. As Rousseau also understood, associations are a natural part of human existence and would be inevitable in a democratic polity larger than a very small city-state, perhaps no bigger than a village. Whenever an attempt is made to institute democratic process on a scale larger than, say, a village, then a variety of associations will exist, each partly autonomous in relation to the others and to the state. If I understand his argument rightly, Professor Green's communities are intended to reflect this assumption.

The trouble is that any polity containing a number of somewhat autonomous associations is prone to certain problems. There is the problem that Professor Green has in mind: inequalities may—probably will—develop among the associations; and there is the problem I had in mind: these inequalities in turn will produce morally unacceptable inequalities among individuals. In addition, there is the problem exhibited every day in pluralist orders. To put the problem in classical terms, how are the particularistic ends sought by the associations and their members to be reconciled with the good of others and, finally, the good of all?

Now it is a common error of socialists to think that a socially owned and controlled economy would, somehow, miraculously solve such problems. I can't say whether Professor Green believes this to be true, though he sometimes sounds as if he did. In any case, it is a dangerous illusion. To be sure, as we all know an authoritarian regime could

provide for “social” ownership and control of the economy, and deny autonomy to associations and organizations of all kinds, including economic enterprises, political parties, and local governments. Democratic socialists are inclined to deny that this would be socialism; and clearly it would not be democratic. But if autonomous associations and organizations *are* permitted to exist, then social ownership will not rescue a democratic socialist order from the problems of pluralism. One may, of course, simply stipulate that what one *means* by such an order is that these problems no longer exist, or that “socialist consciousness” would have eliminated them. But to solve problems by stipulation is not to solve them at all.

Such relevant experience as is now available confirms my forecast. Although so far as I am aware no country exists that combines a socially owned economy with a democratic polity, the experiences in East European countries where liberalization and decentralization have gone furthest show pretty decisively that the problems of pluralism transcend economic orders.

This is not to say, certainly, that all solutions to the problems of pluralism are equally good or bad. Professor Green and I would agree, I think, that solutions requiring the suppression of all autonomous associations are very bad indeed. Certain changes in structures and in civic consciousness that democratic socialism might help to bring about could also make the problems of pluralism less virulent and intractable. Yet I think the problems will still be serious enough, for they are bound to arise in any attempt to apply democracy on a large scale and, therefore, to allow a variety of autonomous associations and organizations to exist.

In clarifying his account of a society that is both socialist and democratic, as I hope he does, Professor Green is going to have to come to grips with these problems. Though he may not altogether appreciate my saying so, he will discover that at heart he is really a pluralist. And as a democrat he will have to confront the problems that are bound to exist in any system of democratic pluralism. I wish him luck. □

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A Public Service Message from the American Income Life
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chairman of the board and chief executive officer.

Economic Immunization

by Bernard Rapoport

The thwarting of the trend toward monopoly is best achieved by creating laws that will prevent its occurrence. The proper approach to eliminating monopolies is through the taxing device—yes, a tax on bigness. For example, if the company did \$100-200 million a year in business there would be a 1% tax on gross sales; \$200-300 million, the tax would be 2%; \$300-400 million, 3%; \$400-500 million, 4%; \$500-600 million, 5%; and so on. In other words, if one bought a car from General Motors the tax might be \$10,000 or \$12,000 and a similar car from American Motors would have a tax of \$30 or \$40. I know there will be tumultuous shouting against this kind of proposal, such as "Do you want to stop progress?" "How will we compete with other nations?" "What will we do about the foreign multinationals that operate in our country?" These are serious questions. I submit that an even more serious one is, what we mean when we talk about preserving the "American way of life"? Everyone is in favor of that, and yet it almost defies definition. What we perceive America to be is a country that affords great opportunity in a climate of freedom. Promoting this requires, it seems to me, the kind of tax that I have just outlined.

I do not favor limits on growth except at that point where it threatens our precious democracy and economic freedom. I suspect too that we have been brainwashed to the point where we have more confidence in machines than we do in people, that we relate efficiency to what is bigger and accept this as an incontrovertible fact. I suspect this is just another one of those myths that can be exploded with proper investigation.

The concept that I have advocated above is what I call economic immunization. We understand immunizing our population against disease.

We need to extend this thinking to our economic system as well. Personally, I feel that President Carter's approach toward the capital gains tax may be right in terms of short-term gains. I do not believe that there should be special treatment from income gained from the sale of stocks in the short term. Gains from such transactions should be fully taxed because such "deals" make no meaningful contribution to the national interest. We should enact those tax credit laws that do change behavior to the national interest. For that reason an entrepreneur who wants to start a business and holds the stock for ten years or longer has made a contribution to the national interest, and a 25% tax rate for him or her would be in order. Anyone who has experienced the trials and tribulations, and especially the risk, attendant to initiating a new enterprise can fully understand this point.

A proper use of the tax credit has been suggested by Jerry Brady of Senator Kennedy's staff. This was to give a credit of \$300 or \$400 to each American family to put in storm windows. Now again, here a tax credit could change behavior to the national interest. Not only would it result in lots of new jobs, but it would lessen our energy needs.

Addressing, most briefly, such problems as regulation and consumer protection laws, regarding the former I would think that most boards relating to economic control should have three business representatives, three labor representatives, and four public representatives. On the Consumer Protection Act, I favor enactment for the reason that a confident public will buy more and such an agency would contribute to the public's confidence.

In conclusion, I think categorical cliches sound good even when they are on opposites, such as "small is beautiful" or contrarywise, "freedom without restraint." Neither can be accepted as the final answer. I believe economic immunization, that is, building into our economic system those inhibitors that will prevent those happenings to our society that inure to its detriment, is one approach that needs to be considered seriously by the Administration and our Congress. The ideas expressed here are for one intent—to stimulate intelligent dialogue that will promote democracy and capitalism.

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